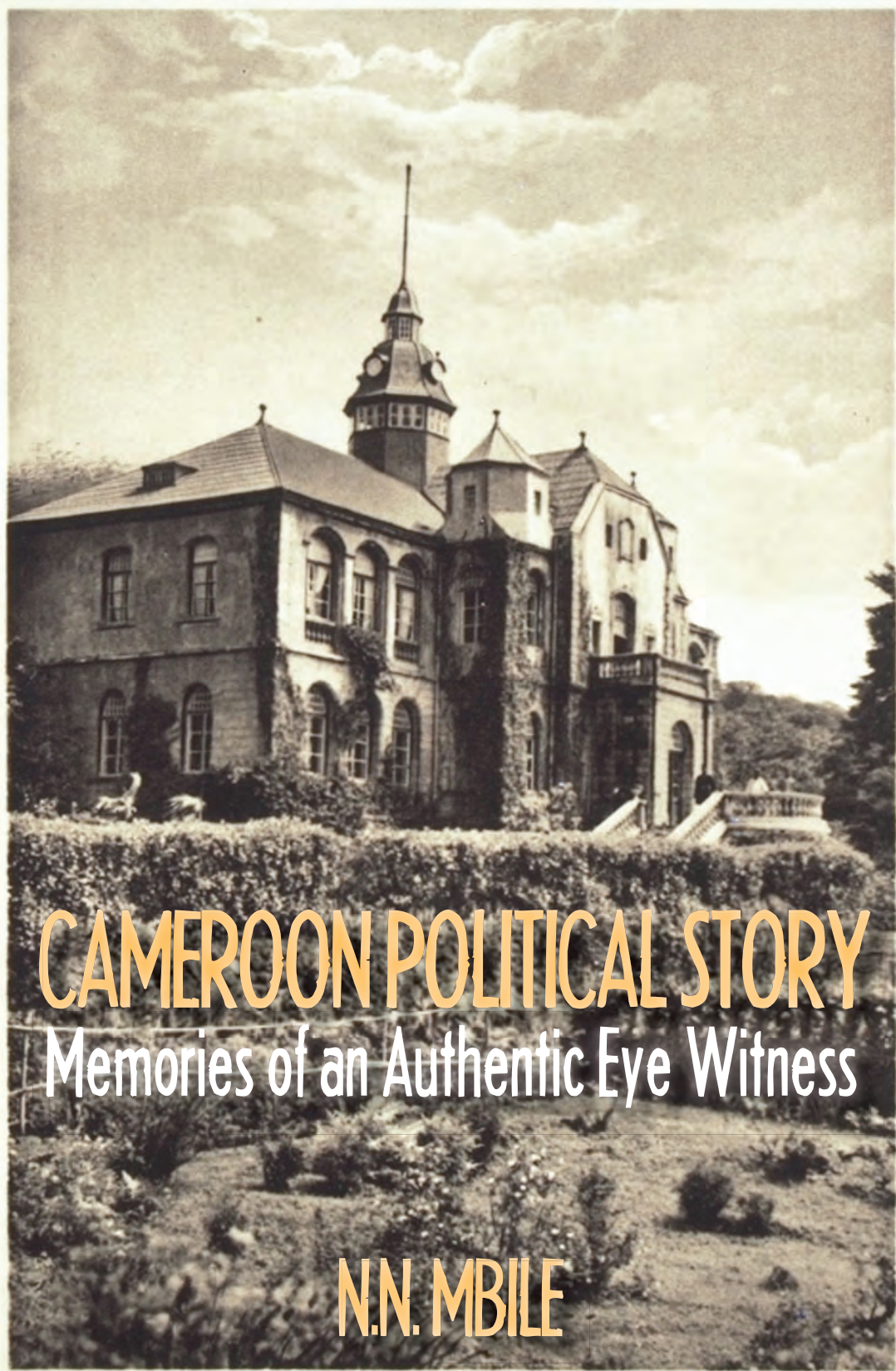




CAMEROON POLITICAL STORY

Memories of an Authentic Eye Witness

N.N. MBILE

VISIT...

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Cameroon Political Story

Memories of an Authentic Eye Witness

Nerius Namaso Mbile



Langa Research & Publishing CIG
Mankon, Bamenda

Publisher:

Langaa RPCIG

Langaa Research & Publishing Common Initiative Group

P.O. Box 902 Mankon

Bamenda

North West Region

Cameroon

Langaagrp@gmail.com

www.langaa-rpcig.net

Distributed in and outside N. America by African Books Collective

orders@africanbookscollective.com

www.africanbookcollective.com

ISBN: 9956-717-77-0

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Dedication

I have decided to dedicate this book to six men, three of them posthumously.

The first is Mr. H.O. Anderson, Assistant District Officer, Kumba, who on 27th April 1933 at Lipenja awarded me a scholarship, under the then Kumba Native Administration, for five years study at Kumba Government School. Mr. Anderson is reported to have died at Enugu, as a young administrative officer in 1941. In consequence, I have been robbed, by his untimely death, of the opportunity of ever meeting and showing gratitude to a man whose singular decision set me off on the path that serves me to this day.

The second is my dear father, Mbile wa Ngembeni who, despite his limited exposure to the blessings of education, invested all he could afford to send me to school. The third is Mr. Henry Anjeh Usim, from Isangele, a college chum in Calabar, Nigeria, and bosom friend who, as Forest Officer Meme/Ndian, was killed in November 1971 in the creeks off Bamusso, reportedly by Nigerians sea marauders. The fourth is Nfor Solomon Ashu Arrey of Ossing, Manyu, who from the death of my father has virtually filled his place and is today my most intimate political compatriot, father and friend. The fifth is my friend and companion, Chief Deah John Ngoh, of Malende - Kumba, with whom I have shared personal attachment for the past thirty years. The sixth and of course by no means least, is President Paul Biya who, on 6th November 1992, ended my years of virtual isolation in the political wilderness and by his leadership qualities of courage, tolerance and the acceptance of democracy with a human face, has produced a peaceful, stable Cameroon Fatherland, in which such a work as this has been possible. Since independence in 1961, Cameroon has grown to more than double its population, while others around us have been steeped in tragedy and war.

Indeed, to these six men I have humbly dedicated my contribution of the Cameroon political Story. As all wade through its pages in search of authentic knowledge of our history, may they be richly rewarded with fruitful assimilation of its contents. Thus shall my humble effort be not in vain, but of eternal value to those, who, urged by the thirst to know, shall come to draw from this fountain.

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Preface

This effort is not strictly my memoirs; it is a mix between that, a bit of my biography and the Cameroon political story, heavily weighted in favour of that part of the Republic formerly identified as Southern Cameroons, later West Cameroon, now South West and North West Provinces. The pressure on me to produce this record has come from many sides: the intellectual youth who have often enjoyed bits of my story; the scholar who has often complained that none of the political leaders of our recent past have in their own hand left something concrete on the record of their time. Lastly, it is my own resolve not to deprive history of the story of a typical African boy who rose from the village and to provide this authentic account of some of our historic incidents.

Some 140 years after Alfred Saker (a British Baptist Missionary) landed at Victoria with 200 freed slaves from America, there should be in this record evidence of that contact brought here by the colony of blacks earlier exposed to European/American contact, in their long forced sojourn to the new world.

Yes, that influence came with the English Language, however distorted, becoming the lingua franca of the Cameroons from 1858, continuing even through the German period (1886 - 1916), and holding on to this day. With the language came the culture, no matter how diluted by the influences of local tradition and clashing European patterns. It is therefore no exaggeration to register British influence in Cameroon as the longest of any European power – 140 years. The inference here means that Great Britain not only enjoys undying respect and historic links with the peoples of this part of Africa, but also must face the residual responsibility that goes with such attachment to our longest colonising power.

In presenting this contribution of the *Cameroon Political Story*, I owe gratitude to a large number of friends and well-wishers as well as to my ordinary admirers from the crowd who have always urged me to write. Here I want to remember the man who typed the rough manuscript, Mr. Matuke William Mboe, and the nimble fingers of Martha Shoken, Priscilla Lyonga, Gladys Gamnje which put the rough type and my dictation into the computer. Earlier, I must remember Emmanuel Aka of blessed memory, Bobe Gwellem who was fascinated by the story, Dr. Dorothy L. Njeuma (Vice Chancellor University of Buea) who encouraged me strongly, Dr. Victor Julius Ngoh and Mr. Wang Metuge

who all rallied to urge me on. Last, but by no means least, my dedicated friend Thomas Eyambe who provided the little wonder of the computer which recorded and memorised what we fed into its incredible memory. Mr Wem Mwambo (CDC) also assisted in many ways including proof reading. Surely without these friends, I would certainly not have reached the stage of producing a clean draft with which to face the printers.

Can I ever count them all in their long list, standing like the fans by the race course, to urge the runner on? Several researchers, particularly those with a bent for history, some coming even from abroad, regularly called for assistance as they prepared their theses. At the end of our exchanges, they almost always turned to me and said, “Pa, you must write.”

One important fact in the story is that it has been written in over two decades and there are two reasons for this. When the rough typing alone cost me fifty thousand francs and the corrected piece as well as new ideas and reconstruction were going to require several other fifties, I was compelled to shelf my ambition at least for some time. Then came the element of constant arrival of new events in our fast unfolding political panorama and here I found myself hardly able to keep pace with them. When, however, from 1992, my political fortunes registered a positive score, I returned to my ambition to write this story. Mr. Thomas Eyambe, a young silent admirer of mine sprang a surprise on me one day. He called up and said, “Honourable, I can provide you with a computer, to help produce your story.” I was thrilled and excited. The equipment came in cartons and was quickly installed by Martha Shoken of the CDC Information Systems Department. Soon, we were crowding around the little wonder machine that even had the human voice announcing, “printing started,” “please load paper in the auto sheet feeder,” and even saying “thank you” when satisfied, etc.

One disturbing factor was the unending arrival of new events each as interesting as the other, all vying to be included in the story. There were others that created the problem of dates and time. For instance, by the time Dr. John Ngu Foncha died in April 1999, we had already printed “Foncha Has a Place” in the book. I had to leave that story untouched, but faced the problem of where I had named five survivors of the first thirteen as Foncha, Muna, Lainjo, Ngala, Mbile. Now Foncha had reduced us to four.

A great friend said to me, “You must stop at some point. Actually

you may have to write the story in volumes.” Can I ever list them all who encouraged me to write? Permit me however to mention the name of the Rt. Honourable Peter Mafany Musonge, Prime Minister and Head of Government of the Republic of Cameroon, who strongly encouraged me.

Now that I have answered the many years of call on me to perform this sacred task, I must not fail to commend this effort to all who yearn for knowledge of the history, growth and constitutional evolution of Cameroon. I mean the student, the historian, the political scientist as well as the general reader thirsty for authentic information on the history of a country which after more than a century of administrative metamorphosis settled to its present statehood in 1961, a Cameroon reborn. The *Cameroon Political Story* is a long journey through the eyes and actions of the author himself.

Foreword

Hon. N. N. Mbile is one of the rare breed of surviving founding fathers of the Cameroon nation west of the Mungo. He has played a preponderant role in the politics of this nation for almost half a century with lots of zeal, patriotism and foresight. Indeed, destiny assigned a noteworthy place for him in the political dispensation of this country at different stages of its evolution.

He started off as an intelligent schoolboy in his Lipenja native land, and crossed to Nigeria to earn knowledge that was to stand him in good stead for the tough, exacting and rugged political career that he pursued relentlessly. He had a stint as a hard-hitting journalist for the Zik Press in 1947, a job which was risky in those days as he had occasional brushes with the colonial administrators whose high-handedness he attacked.

By the force of his courage, wit and talent, he distinguished himself as a mouthpiece of the voiceless. That easily impelled the work-force of the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) to enlist him as their Secretary General who would assert their concerns to their European masters. He diligently exercised trade union power to the benefit of the thousands of CDC workers then.

From then on, Hon. Mbile stood out as one of the exuberant Cameroonians bubbling with the determination to free their people from years of colonial rule. He went headlong into an enduring and challenging political expedition, and became a Member of Parliament in Zik's NCNC at first, forming the KPP later, and finally allying with the KNC of Dr. E.M.L. Endeley at the peak of reunification politics.

While he was still an MP, he took positions which earned him scorn and misunderstanding from some of his compatriots of Southern Cameroons who branded him as a sell-out to the NCNC of Zik at a time Dr. Endeley had pulled out of the NCNC on grounds of the "Benevolent Neutrality." Now that the story has been told and actions and opinions of succeeding players lie bare along the path of Cameroon history, it is for the impartial reader in his sober reflection to dare judgement or opinion on the sincerity or otherwise, of those earlier actors in a scene that ever continues to unfold.

His position on the reunification question has always been misunderstood and shrouded in controversy. What transpired before and during the Fouban Constitutional Conference are experiences he lived body and soul, and contributed to with patriotic fervour, and

commitment.

From the plebiscite in 1961 to the pacific revolution of 1972, Hon. Mbile knew mixed fortunes, as Member of West Cameroon House of Assembly and served as minister of different portfolios in the West Cameroon government, before being unexpectedly dropped by the Muna government in Buea early 1972. Hon. Mbile continued to be a loyal citizen and statesman despite the intrigues, treachery and bashing he had from his political peers and adversaries living and dead. He has, therefore chronicled his political life as it affected the *Cameroon Political Story*. He sets the records straight on so many areas surrounding the question of Cameroon's reunification and the Founban Conference which many of his contemporaries have been mute about or simply distorted.

The *Cameroon Political Story* is understandably his memoir, recounting a life-long romance and involvement in the political evolution of Cameroon. He describes with great wit, humour and the power of narrative, the events that culminated in the birth of Cameroon. He describes each event with clarity and penetrating insight as a participant and observer. As he states so clearly, "the *Cameroon Political Story* is a long journey through the eyes and actions of the author himself." He raises questions in his analysis which call on every patriotic Cameroonian to reflect on how far we have come as a society and how far we have to go.

This fascinating and revealing book bears significance for all Cameroonians and the world as it demonstrates that belief in a common ancestry, collective effort, the will to succeed and positive wisdom are needed in full measure to unleash our best potential for meaningful progress, peace and unity, For like Hon Mbile succinctly put it:

"Our Children
Now own a fatherland,
In which to dwell in happiness, And proudly call their own,
To love and to adore..."

Peter Mafany Musonge
Yaounde, 15 September, 1999

This historic “Unity Picture” was taken after a joint rally at the Buea Market, in May 1961 of CPNC/KNDP leaders. *Front row left to right – those recognisable:* Mr. Dan Nanga, Dr. Fonlon, Hon. Ndamukong, Hon. Lafon, Hon. Ekangaki, Hon. A.N. Jua, Prime Minister J.N. Foncha, Hon. Dr. Endeley, Hon. P.M. Kemcha, Hon. N.N. Mbile, Hon. Gladys Difo, Hon. Daiga, Hon. S.T. Muna. *Back row left to right – those recognisable:* Hon. Nganje, P.M. Kale, Hon. Effiom, P.M. Ewusi, Hon. Fritz Ngale, Mr. George Lysinge.

After the plebiscite of 11th February, a six-man C.P.N. C. delegation (Dr. E.M.L. Endeley, Hon. N. N. Mbile, Lawyer S.M.L. Endeley, Mr. E.K. Martin, Chief Sakwe Bokwe, Rev. Ando Seh) pressed its case to the United Nations for interpretation of the results. They contended that since the plebiscite results, unlike those of an election could be binding forever, interpretation should not be based on mere simple majority votes territory-wide. It ought rather to depend on our relevant existing tribal or ethnic majority opinion, the tribe being the most authentic unit within our ethnic compartments in the territory. The Molongo (Bakweri), Mokanya (Oroko), Nwane-Ngoh (Bakossi) sponsored the delegation to press this point. Prime Minister J.N Foncha and Hon. S. T. Muna were also at the UN on the opposite side.

In reply, the wise men of the UNO counselled the Cameroonians to “return home together and make unification work.” Both sides signed a truce and landed at Tiko together. At the United Nations some representatives had revealed that many of their own countries bore names and shapes dictated through conquests and superior powers and that Southern Cameroonians should regard themselves fortunate to have been asked to freely choose their own future.

Mount Cameroon Erupts (March/April, 1999)



The Carthaginian sailor, Hanno, named it the “flaming chariot of the gods.” Those living around Mt. Cameroon remember its 1922, 1959 and 1982 eruptions, but the 1999 action appears more history making than the rest. It swept westward towards the Atlantic just as in 1922, down a 16 kilometre trail that ravaged farms and palm plantations, turning valleys into hills and leaving a huge pile of hardened rock the height of a story building, above the ground, standing there to defy the ages. It had stopped short of reaching the sea but just crossed the Limbe-Idenau tarred road.

Unlike at earlier actions, the people were ready to contain its ravages. President Biya and Prime Minister Musonge visited Bakingili where its leading thrust forced evacuation of four hundred people to Tiko until its ebb signalled their return. The Cameroon Government and some friendly nations dispatched help.



Nerius Namaso Mbile was born in 1923 at Lipenja, Batanga, Ndian Division. He attended primary school at Lipenja N.A. School (1930-32), Kumba Government School (1933-37), Buea Government School (1938-39), Umuahia Government College/Hope Waddell Training Institute Calabar (1940-45). He obtained his Senior Cambridge Certificate at the 1945 December exams. After one year- as teacher RCM Ikassa, Ndian (1946), he joined the Zik's Group of Newspapers Lagos as Reporter and was later posted as Resident Correspondent to the Cameroons (1947-49). He was elected General Secretary CDC Workers' Union in succession to Dr. E.M.L. Endeley who moved up to President of the Union (1949). Later, he was elected President of the Union (1950-51). In December 1951, he was elected Member of the Eastern House of Assembly, Enugu and Nigerian House of Representatives, Lagos (1952-53). From 1957-72 he was member, Southern Cameroons House of Assembly, Minister of Works and Transport Southern Cameroons (1958), Secretary of State Works and Transport, West Cameroon (1965-67). Secretary of State Lands and Surveys (1968), Secretary of State Primary Education (1969-72), appointed Chairman CDC Board of Directors (1992-date), journalist, trade unionist, politician.

No one recorded when I was born, but I can tell you my age. This I have been able to do by using the year school came to my village and when I was admitted to the then Lipenja N.A. school. School came to Lipenja in 1929, and I was admitted to the school in 1930 with my admission number 100. Since my father, a retired “German plantation Overseer” could not possibly have lost a single day to secure my admission to school, judging by his intense desire to educate his children, I have calculated backwards, and obtained the year 1923 for my birth. A second factor has helped the calculation. My elder brother Akpeke was sent to school in Kumba in 1926, and he says that I was about three, when he and another family boy Epaka were sent to attend Government School Kumba in 1926. Sadly, the two boys came back to the village, having been dismissed for returning late from holidays. Having obtained the year 1923, I then got, through the help of my parents who used the planting season as their calendar, the month of April, leaving me to personally fix the 4th of that month as my birthday, to complete the quiz.

Somehow, I liked school and was often one of those in the chase to catch runaway boys. In no time, my pidgin English was not only fluent but I was verging into speaking what was then described as “grammar.” The letters of the alphabet A-Z fascinated me as I joined them to form words. In time I was able to read and recite the Atlantic Reader One off by heart from cover to cover. My inquiring little mind enjoyed the new words the teachers taught, and I eagerly looked forward to what new the teachers were going to bring.

At Death of Uncle Iyele

As the first and then only child of my mother, I was always sure of something tasty kept for me in the calabash or dish up the fire place while she was away in the farm, and going to school was pleasant if for nothing else. On occasions, I would bring home one of the unhappy hungry boys who attended school from other villages, to share the dish with me. I enjoyed playing this role of a proud benefactor, helping some one less fortunate than I. Against all this I kept a good

attendance to school until an uncle (Pa Iyele) died. Trying to behave like the other children who stayed away from school whenever a relative died, I absented myself that day from school to show my grief, and to join in the usual feasting that accompanied the death of such notables as uncle Iyele. I was mistaken.

The wild dancing juju men, some with darkened faces who poured in from villages around, many wearing frightful looking masks and masquerades, were no respecters of those not members of their cult, even if they were children of the bereaved family. They swept us all off the streets to take shelter with the women behind the mud houses and fences. At the end of the day, I saw little purpose in having lost my school day for a death celebration in which others enjoyed virtual monopoly. If any event remains in my memory of that fateful day, it is the assignment to us the children, of the not too respectful job of washing the intestines and stomachs of slaughtered goats and cows, in the village stream.

The worst was yet to come to me for that one-day absence from school. During the Empire Day, a prize came up for a T-shirt to every child who had registered a hundred percent attendance to class. I lost the prize and wept bitterly in paying this last price for trying to do like others at the passing away of uncle Iyele. After three years in Lipenja N. A. School, I was by January 1933 one of the three boys promoted from Lipenja to proceed to Kumba Government School. The excitement in the school and in my family was intense, as my father prepared to have me conveyed by my two elder brothers Dio and Akpeke, to Kumba. Due to a knee ailment, I could not walk the four days trek to Kumba. My father, a hard driving disciplinarian toughened by German training decided that my two brothers carry me on their backs, in turns, to Kumba.

On the first day, my father himself accompanied us and did the carrying most of that day. We slept at Madie, and on the second day, we pressed on to Lokando while dad and mother returned to Lipenja. The third day found us arriving Boa Bakundu and on the fourth day, we got to Kake I. In the morning, we reported before the Head Master (Mr. G. E. Offiong) at the Kumba Government School. We had no luck. Schools had opened one week before, so we were late as admissions had closed. When my brother Akpeke became a nuisance to the Headmaster with his string of pleas "I beg Sir, I beg Sir," the Headmaster ordered one of his boys to drive us away with a long whip

until we got out of his school compound to the road side of his hibiscus hedge.

After this sad end of our long four-day hike, my brothers chose to pick up the remaining pieces by taking me to the General Hospital where my ailing knee was treated. In no time, I was running about and playing with the local boys of my age. When my knee was fully healed, we embarked on the trek back to Lipenja, arriving there to the joy of my friends and family. My knee had healed but my father's ambition was again dashed to the ground. "So this one too will not be educated" he said sadly. In the morning my father took me back to the Headmaster, Mr. Selete. The Headmaster was in full agreement with him that I continue in the school, so that at the end of the year my dad would personally take me to Kumba in time for admission. But unknown to all of us the hand of destiny was going to dictate something else.

D.O. Anderson Visits Lipenja

Along with another boy, Mathias Ewanga, who also had not obtained admission into Kumba from Lipenja that year, we were repeating class III until something happened. It was towards the end of April, and the Assistant District Officer, Kumba (Mr. H. O. Anderson) came visiting Lipenja. At the end of his inspection of the school, he asked the Headmaster, "Mr. Selete, how many children did you send to Kumba this year?" "Three Sir" the Headmaster replied, "but they were refused admission for being late. Two of them are back in class repeating." The Headmaster asked Ewanga and me to step forward. We did so, holding up our slates for the D.O. to read. The D. O. looked at our slates and saw that each of us had scored five over five in an arithmetic test we had just done. He then looked at us closely and said, "Headmaster, bring them to the Rest House at 3 o'clock."

At 3 o'clock, the Headmaster brought us to the Rest House before the D.O. He told us that he had granted both of us scholarship under the Kumba Native Administration to Kumba Government School, until we passed standard four. This was the limit for the school. The Kumba N. A. would pay our fees, give us books and school clothes and pay us 5 shillings monthly for food. Our dormitory was being built at the moment next to the Headmaster's house to house ten boarders.

Along with two of us, other scholarship winners would come from some other schools – Kurume, Elung, etc. A letter to the Headmaster, Kumba Government School was ready and a messenger who was escorting prisoners to Kumba the following day would travel with us. After checking in the prisoners, he would take us to the Headmaster and hand him the letter from the D.O.

Back home from school the good news of the D. O. granting us scholarship and sending us to Kumba was received with joy by the entire family. My father had travelled out of the village, so his senior wife Bua Mbenda took responsibility to let me go off to Kumba as the D.O. had said. The following day I was accompanied to Toko by my mother where with Mathias Ewanga, the other scholarship boy, we joined Court Messenger Ukpong with his 30 prisoners, on our way to Kumba. It may be worth the record to mention that thirty strong prisoners were escorted from Toko to Kumba by a single unarmed Court Messenger, all for not being able to pay their tax of only about three shillings and six pence a year. It first shows how law abiding the people of NgoloBatanga were, and how hard the times were from the 1929 economic crash that had hit the world right across to Africa. It was difficult to earn a single shilling.

As we marched on the four-day trek to Kumba, very often with song, conversation and laughter in spite of the impending fate of the prisoners, one of the men, who clearly looked their leader, took my little load off my head to help me on. His name was Meboka, and he exhibited a spirit totally different from the rest. He led in the singing and admonished those who did not sing but trod in silence to their one-month jailhouse. We finally arrived Kumba on 1st May 1933, and Messenger Ukpong first checked the men into the prison yard and then took us before the Kumba Government School Headmaster to whom he handed the D.O.'s letter.

The Headmaster received us warmly this time, after reading the letter. He asked one of his schoolboys to escort us to his house where his wife also warmly received us and gave us a meal. Following instructions in the D.O.'s letter, the Headmaster obtained money from the N.A. Treasury with which he bought our school clothes and other requirements. The next day, we began school in earnest at Kumba. What had been the heart-breaking disappointment of January that year in the refusal to admit us, now became the huge blessing that enabled us win the five-year scholarship from D.O. Anderson. It took care of

our schooling at Kumba Government School until 1937 when we completed our standard four and moved on to Buea Government School in 1938 to pursue our standards five and six course. In that 1938 class from the four Government Schools of Buea, Kumba, Victoria and Nyasoso which then fed Buea Government School standard five and six, some prominent names deserve the record; Sam Endeley, David Endeley, Philip Ewusi, Johnson Malafa, Jacob Ilongo, Emmanuel Sona, Lydia Bwindi, Yaya Amoniba, Bernard Alima, Sadrack Mokake.

In 1939, a big date our class awaited arrived. We sat the Umuahia Entrance Examination and the results showed three students from Buea who passed the college entrance out of 48 passes in the whole of Nigeria that year. The three were Namaso Mbile, Emmanuel Oguntayo, and Samuel Endeley. Sam and I were granted two of the three scholarship places available to Cameroon Province that year, while Emmanuel Oguntayo whose province was Abeukuta, and whose father was the Post Master at Buea had other arrangements made for his college education.

My Father's Reaction

I arrived home at Lipenja with the good news of my double success. I had passed my Standard VI Examination and I had also won a six-year government scholarship to Umuahia College. My family were delighted, though my father had his reservation in regard to my going to college. He had other ideas. While serving as Headman and later Overseer in the German plantations before the First World War, he had the unhappy experience of how the Germans regarded the highly educated African; they did not appear to like them.

Possibly due to their education, they were at times cocky to their German masters who resented such conduct, preferring to deal with the less educated and more obedient workers. My father preferred to see me belong to the second category of the African, whom he had found, fared better under the white man. He now feared that my going to college rather than ending my education at Standard VI, may turn me into that category of the black man claiming “plenty of book” in his head and cocky before his employers, resulting in his being disliked. He had seen Douala people suffer before the Germans for “knowing

too much book.”

It took some time for me to understand this thinking, if I ever did, but luckily my father was finally persuaded to change his mind by one Mr. Philip Oben of Ossing who was living in Lipenja and was my father’s close friend. Sese Nangiya of Dibonda Koroki, a cousin of my father, heard of my going to college. He did not only send his support that I go, but contributed two kegs of cocoa towards the cost. I and one Ngoe Monde head-loaded the two kegs of cocoa from Lipenja to Ndian¹ to sell at four shillings each. I paid Ngoe Monde one shilling, for his “bambe”², and kept the seven. My senior brother Dio Mbile working at Mokoko Mbonge, a German plantation, sent me four shillings while my mother, Sarah Ituka, her mother Bua Dibando and Auntie Okporo, put all their savings together to raise five shillings. The total money, sixteen shillings³, was what I left Lipenja my village via Kumba and Victoria on my way to Umuahia College, with.

Another Kumba N.A. Scholarship

Following a communication from the Headmaster Buea Government School, the same Mr. G.E. Offiong, to D.O. Kumba Mr. V.K. Johnson, I was granted a second scholarship by Kumba N .A. for six pounds a year to provide for books and equipment. Collecting travelling warrants from Kumba D.O.’s office I left for Umuahia travelling by lorry to Victoria, by ship to Port Harcourt and by train to Umuahia. The college was some four miles out of town at a village called Omodike, so this last bit of the journey was on foot. At Victoria I had joined Mr. Alfred Mbongo (later Dr. Mbongo) a senior student of Umuahia College and a native of Kumba. At Port Harcourt we met other Cameroon students notably one Alfred Tamajong (later Engineer Tamajong Ndumu) all returning to the college that January 1940. From Umuahia Railway Station we trekked to the college while a hired truck-

¹ Ndian as used here referred to the UAC “beach factory” where natives from the hinterland sold their produce of palm oil, kernel and cocoa

² Bambe means carrier, generally with the head; fee for carrying

³ At the 1962 exchange rate of 35FCFA CFA per shilling, sixteen shilling would equal 530FCFA CFA

man happily rolled our bags on as we walked the four miles to the college. At Umuahia College, I found a happy shade of things.

School clothes were supplied to each arriving student from under wears to shorts, shirts, pullover, bed sheets, blanket, pillow, bucket, cutlass and broom. Our wooden beds all had mattresses and generally, the contrast between Umuahia and the Buea Government School dormitory we had left behind, showed a virtual world apart. Discipline at Umuahia was tight with the government of the college almost all in the hands of the senior students especially those from Classes IV to VI. There were two senior prefects (Mbanugo who latter became Dr. Mbanugo of Onitsha and W. Ndep who also later became Dr. Ndep, Director of Veterinary Services Western Nigeria). Almost all tutors except four were British and the principal Mr. Tolfry had been Senior Education Officer, Buea. This made him interested in the particular problems of the Cameroon students, and possibly why he preferred to have two Senior Prefects Mbanugo (from Onitsha) and Ndep (from Mamfe).

A brisk six months (January - July) at Umuahia was putting us the freshmen in our stride when misfortune struck. The 2nd World War was entering its second year, and the British had seized the German-owned plantations in the Cameroons and detained the large number of German nationals who were running them. The British needed a suitable place to intern these nationals of the enemy for the duration of the war. Our college stood out ideal. Four miles out of town the place was well fenced and secured. Our beds and bunks, our small electric plant, our kitchen, our small water source, all these made Umuahia College, the ideal place to intern these Germans and later Italians, for the duration of the war.

So, on July 3rd 1940 the college was closed down and students all sent home with the message that they would be informed of whatever arrangements that would be made for their education. We the Cameroon students were moved by train to Port Harcourt, and by ship to Victoria. The other students were dispersed to their homes virtually all within the heart of the then Eastern Region of Nigeria. From Victoria, we all struck off to our various homes and I to Lipenja, where I awaited instructions from D.O. Kumba to whom I had first reported as I returned. Sometime in September 1940, a letter came to me through D.O. Kumba conveying the good news that admission had been secured for me at Hope Waddell Training Institute Calabar, and

that I report there. D.O. Kumba assisted in the transport arrangements and I later learnt that Sam Endeley my mate at Buea was also found a place at Hope Waddell Calabar. Indeed we soon met and travelled to old Calabar where a new span of five years of schooling up to December 1945 faced us.

H.W.T.I. Calabar was totally different from Umuahia College. Discipline was lax and no where near Umuahia standard. Students were virtually free to do as they pleased, even to the point of choosing which lessons to do and which to ignore. Boys could be seen going to town during school hours. This was a mixed school with boys and girls and with boarders and day students. There was also a Teachers Training section where R. Ntoko, H.P. Sone, A. T. Enaw and Peter Nsoesie all from the Cameroons did their Grade II Teacher Training.

Those College Days

It is not easy to imagine the ordeals through which Cameroons students went in their effort to acquire college education in the British colonial days. The arrangement of administering the territory as an integral part of Nigeria created excuse for Britain as Administering Authority to use Umuahia College in Eastern Nigeria as the point where general academic education was meted out to those with the best aptitude for it. This meant sharing one college between the six provinces of Cameroons, Calabar, Ogoja, Owerri, Onitsha and Rivers. When, after 1947, Bamenda came along, it meant sharing Umuahia amongst seven provinces. The arrangement involved a silent quota in the files of some three students per province annually with the giants of Owerri, Onitsha and Calabar often taking up the extras in a class of thirty per year.

We can see the inadequacy in this effort of the British Government on the score of education, particularly in the Cameroons during her forty-five years of administration. Had the missionary bodies not come in with a more robust contribution, the results would not have been as impressive as the records show both in the Cameroons and Nigeria proper.

There were two colleges which served the colony of Lagos “Kings’s College” for boys “Queen’s College” for girls. The two institutions were essentially for the more advanced British Colony of Lagos, but exceptional cases once a while were selected from the

provinces.

An annual entrance examination to Umuahia College was a keen contest to select the best three boys per province, and the year 1939 entrance results found three names from Cameroons Province all provided by Buea Government School: Namaso Mbile, Emmanuel Oguntayo and Samuel Endeley. Our proud headmaster, Mr. G.E. Offiong confidently marched to the Senior Education Officer Buea who, after checking through the records, granted Sam Endeley and me two of the three scholarship places for Cameroons Province. Emmanuel Oguntayo was sent by his father to Abeukuta, his home town, for his college education. Unfortunately, Umuahia College did not last long as it was chosen for use as an internment camp for Germans and Italians detained in Nigeria as enemy nationals, due to the war. The college was closed down on July 3rd 1940 and we, students were sent home, and later assigned to various colleges in Nigeria. Some classes (V and VI) went as far as Sierra Leone. Endeley and I were sent to Hope Waddell Training Institute (H.W.T.I.) Calabar, that romantic town by the estuary of the Cross River.

We, however, had a rude reception to the Hope Waddell Institute. Transport between Cameroons and Nigeria was well known to be virtually limited to irregular boats between Victoria and Calabar, Port Harcourt or Lagos, at times involving months of waiting especially at that time of war. We had considered ourselves exceptionally lucky to have lost only a week to arrive Calabar, and thought we had an excellent excuse for the few days of lateness to a school we were reporting to for the first time; we who had lost our own school through no fault of ours but due to a war that involved us all.

No, not so to Mr. Smith the Scottish headmaster of Hope Waddell. We were late to report on the opening day of the college as the rules insisted and so we were sentenced to six hours of grass cutting. As we were marched away by the senior prefect to clear a huge overgrown compound of the headmaster, in the Calabar September sun, Sam and I saw a serious challenge testing us to the limit and quietly prayed to be able to overcome it. With borrowed machetes we had begun at 8 a.m. and at 4 p.m. our taskmaster came to dismiss us off from a punishment that both Sam and I contend was undeserved to this day. Frankly we had not understood that the six hours were not measured in time but in the volume of the grass to cut.

In time, we settled down at H.W.T.I. Calabar, notwithstanding that

harsh reception, and soon made friends with fellow students. They looked at us virtually as refugees disturbed from our school by the war, and thus were due some measure of sympathy and patronage.

Off my schoolwork, I took a good interest in the progress of the war, in the various theatres of the fighting. I also found myself a keen observer of some of the activities of local political leaders like Gage Odyer, O.B. Otu and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe (reading a good deal of his writing in *The West African Pilot* and other papers, as well as in his *Renascent Africa*). We formed a branch of the Zikist Movement in the college and amongst our activities we included reading Zik's writings. Also, we the Cameroons students in Calabar formed a branch of the Cameroons Youth League (C.Y.L.) which had been launched in Lagos. My friends in college gave me the nickname of "SS Politics." This was because I got to the point where I was virtually accorded the recognition amongst my fellow students as a small authority on matters like the progress of the war and names of Generals, Presidents, Prime Ministers and Political Leaders across the world. Even students higher in class than me very often turned to me for help. I read ravenously everything I could lay hands on. As I progressed in college, new knowledge and openings came my way. I trekked for miles to attend and was most thrilled to listen to speeches at my first election rally when three men ran for the one Calabar seat to the Legislative Council, Lagos (Gage Odyer, Rev. Okon Efiong and O.B. Otu). Rev. Okon Efiong won. Calabar (one seat) and Lagos (3 seats) were the only two places in Nigeria that enjoyed franchise during the days of the Richards Constitution.

I soon realised an easier sea route, for travelling home on holidays, then generally only by ship through Victoria. United Africa Company (U.A.C.) with plantations in Ndian, Lobe, Bai and Bwenga were operating a plantation (C.O.P.E.) near Calabar. The company also owned wharves and offices at Calabar. Their boats and launches, therefore, sailed regularly from Calabar to Ndian and Ekondotiti. I only required to study their sailing schedules and book to sail to Ndian when I wished and from there trek to my village.

During the several trips each year on board the U.A.C. boats I met several fellow travellers and made friends. One of such friends was a fellow Cameroonian student, Henry Anje Usim, who was from Isangele not too far from my home village. Henry was in the same class like me though in a different school, the West African People's

Institute (W.A.P.I.) Calabar. We travelled home on most holidays together from when we knew ourselves. We shared wonderful moments and experiences together as we journeyed up and down from Calabar to Ndian, sometimes by motor boat or launches owned by the U.A.C., and on occasions by hand pulled canoes.

One difficult year, we were hurrying back to Calabar for school when the only transport means available was a hand- pulled canoe with four men. Three of the men were the pullers while the fourth man was being transferred to Calabar General Hospital as his ailment could not successfully be treated at Ndian Hospital. It was raining hard as we paddled down the Ndian River on our way to Calabar via Ikang. A small thatch roof built over the canoe to provide shelter from rain was hardly able to keep us from being wet. The wind blew the rain drops across the boat which itself had to be kept afloat through bailing out the rain water collecting at the bottom of the wooden dugout. Some times, the rain ceased, but soon it came again pattering on our frail vessel as it rolled down stream, more by the downward flow of the river current than by the force of the three pullers. The rain came down again, this time with such force that even visibility was impaired and soon darkness came.

One disturbing feature was the ailing man, who kept grunting in pain as the canoe moved on while the rain hammered away. Darkness was around us now and the rain reduced in intensity. Even the grunt of the man in pain seemed to have grown low and gone. Sleep, which respects no one nor time, was gradually beginning to cast its spell on our wet and weary selves. No, not the pullers who kept up a little song as their paddles scooped water to push the canoe on. Occasionally, they would pass their snuffbox round, each man taking a good pinch to keep awake and warm.

The men were in constant conversation, cracking jokes and raising laughter. They were at the rear of the boat while Henry and I sat high up front. Between us lay the ailing man sharing the little thatch roof with us. The pullers sat in the open boat at the rear bothering little about the rain, through years of custom. The ailing man was now quiet and we thought he was gone to sleep, for that sneaky tempter of most living things was already touching even my friend and I. With darkness now around, the only sound came from the strokes of the agile oarsmen as the rain had ceased. It looked quite peaceful now, and Henry and I, despite the cold and rain, fell asleep.

I know not how long we slept, but the canoe was moving forward and the paddlers were certainly at their work. We were now long past the river current unto the slower winding creeks. I woke to hear the men still talking but in whispers as if in fear. Their earlier jokes and laughter had now reduced to measured whispers. Could this change of voice result from the darkness and the night? Their lantern, long lighted, was hanging firmly at our front to warn other users of the sea. Why were the men speaking in whispers? Something woke Henry, who appeared better than I to catch a word or two of their Ibo dialect. Henry had heard something. He shook me firmly to be up. When he felt I was full awake, he drove a whisper into my ear. "Beau, that man is dead." I held my breath from responding too fast. My head was weighing heavily the gravity of the situation. There was dead silence between us, except for the gentle strokes of the paddlers at the rear. It seemed no one had the courage to break the ice, yet it was true. The man was dead and gradually we all came to terms with the harsh truth that we had been sleeping with a dead man, only inches away, for hours in the canoe.

At last, the leading oarsman spoke out to tell us. "My friends, dat man don die." Henry and I had no answer. We were too cold and frightened to venture any reply. The morning sun was then creeping through the clouds and the shadows of darkness were yielding place to the silently penetrating rays of the morning sun. We could see the three men together whispering hard to each other and planning what to do. Between us and they, on the floor of the faithful canoe that had ferried us so far, lay the silent form of the dead man.

The men then pulled the canoe deep into a narrow creek amidst the mangrove forest trees that fringed the creeks of that watery course of our journey, some three hours pulling from Ikang. The boat docked close to some friendly mangrove roots that provided easy landing from this boat with its load of death. Henry and I quickly stepped ashore on the safety of the roots of the mangrove trees. From there we distanced ourselves from the dreadful form of one who only hours before had been a fellow traveller in that canoe of death. One of the men came out from the boat to join us in what turned out to be a serious discussion.

He said to us, "Well, my good friends, it has happened. That man is dead. From here to Ikang is three hours; three hours with that man in the boat. Then at Ikang, we have to report to the authorities. Then

we have to arrange a grave and other things. We don't know this man. We have no money. U .A.C. Ndian are far away up the river.” Now, he came to the major point of his talk: “we, therefore have, decided to bury this man here. That will set us free to sail to Ikang and in some two hours you will be on your bicycles to Calabar. You can sit on the roots there while we work.”

Henry and I just nodded our consent. We could not say otherwise. In fact to us, this was the best way out of the grave problem of continuing with the dead man for hours to Ikang, and then facing the complications awaiting us there. The canoe men then began digging a grave amongst the roots and mud under the mangrove trees. With a blunt cutlass as their only implement, they cut some young mangrove tree sticks and shaped them for use as spades. With these they struggled to move mud and sticks to open a grave in the swamp. After more than an hour of work they got an opening that was barely some three feet deep, and there, to our horror, they lowered the body of our dead companion. As we finally paddled away, I thought I saw one of his limbs sticking out.

Do not ask me at what speed we left the fateful canoe as it touched the sandy beach of Ikang. Henry and I were too shocked to even speak, and in the rest of our lives this sad event was hardly ever mentioned.

This story may be an index of the ordeals through which Cameroon children went, in their struggle to acquire a college education in those days, but it is not the ultimate example. Tamajong Ndumu, for instance, once trekked from Bamenda Nkwe to Calabar, on his way back to Umuahia College

The Second World War

The Second World War was now raging hard with changing fortunes. First was the German sweep across Holland and Belgium and then the stunning fall of France. As students in college we daily followed the unfolding progress of the war. In Africa, British forces took back Ethiopia from the grip of Mussolini's Italy while the North African campaign between British forces and Hitler's Germany was on. Across the English Channel, the British army encircled at Dunkirk just managed to escape, some men even throwing away their coats and rifles to sail to England in whatever could ferry men to the safety of

the British Isles. They called it the “nine-day wonder”; that for nine days the English Channel was as placid as a pond and the near encircled British troops all reached the safety of their homeland shore.

This was a crucial moment of the Second World War. Winston Churchill made his now historic speech calling on all Britain to resist the Germans everywhere should they dare land on British soil. Hitler looked hard at the shores of England only some twenty-one miles away, and possibly remembering the fate of the Spaniards and later of Napoleon at earlier times, decided not to dare. He then turned on the sprawling Soviet Union where he repeated the error of Napoleon.

He launched out across the plains of the Ukraine capturing town after town from the Caspian to the North Sea. The Russian winters added to the hazards of war against the determined troops of the Soviets in their countless numbers. Meanwhile the British and their allies regained their breath and regrouped. Charles De Gaulle crossed to Britain to organise French resistance from there, after touring the then French colonies to mobilise support. It did not take too long for Churchill to secure not only American support with more arms and ammunition, but the more crucial decision of the USA entering the war on the side of Britain and her allies.

Certain historic features of the Second World War deserve mentioning even in a record like this. At the period following the fall of France, and the rout of the British army at Dunkirk, one force remained to give the Germans the British sting, the Royal Air Force. The Germans now depended on their mighty Luftwaffe (German Air Force) to bomb Britain to submission, but this was not to be. The brave boys of the Royal Air Force took to the skies and engaged the German planes over the Channel shooting them down before they crossed to bomb Britain. The air battles and the bravery of the RAF men were so outstanding and so successful that it led to this historic statement of Britain’s war time Prime Minister Winston Churchill; “Never in the field of human conflict has the fate of so many been defended by so few.” He was referring to the fewer brave boys of the Royal Air Force who defended the millions in the islands of Great Britain. Countless would certainly have been killed by German bombs had their planes not been intercepted over the Channel and many shot down before they could cross to do damage.

The story of the Second World War is in volumes but suffice it here to record that when the United States of America entered the war

on the side of Britain and her allies, it was clear to most analysts that Nazi Germany was sure to lose the war. What remained was when, and indeed the indications were fast unfolding. Italy was first to fall, with Benito Mussolini hanged by his own men. Germany was fighting on so many fronts, Russia, North Africa, the Resistance Movements of France, Yugoslavia, Greece and several islands in the Mediterranean. Britain, the United States, De Gaulle's French Resistance groups and the other allied forces finally landed on the shores of France in the summer of 1945 and German capitulation was now only a matter of time. A virtual race was on between the allies driving from the west and the Soviets from the east over who were to take Berlin. The Russians took Berlin first but later the city was shared between the victorious allies. Hitler is reported to have blown himself up to avoid being captured, but many of the Nazi leaders faced trial by tribunals of the victorious allies. Herman Goring committed suicide.

In the eastern theatre of the war, Japan appeared impregnable overrunning Korea, Burma to Singapore threatening even India. Fighting raged between the Japanese and the Americans/British on numerous islands in the Pacific. The British and Americans faced an almost impossible situation fighting the Japanese with suicide squads that brooked no defeat. Even after the fall of Italy and Germany on the West, Japan's resistance may have lengthened the war beyond its 6 years span had the Americans not thrown the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Through the devastation by these two bombs, Japan surrendered and the entire world was relieved of the immeasurable disasters of World War II.

It was quite a coincidence that the Second World War ended as I completed my college education in 1945, both had taken six years.

My Return from School

After taking the Senior Cambridge Examination in December 1945, I sailed home from Calabar, where I had spent some six years. The choice of a career now occupied my time but while awaiting my examination results, I took up a teaching job with the Roman Catholic Mission Ikassa, Ndian. Here under Reverend Father Doeswiek as the Parish Priest and Mr. Z.N. Efamba as Headmaster, I was made Deputy Headmaster of the school and assigned to teach Standard III. The school ran up to Standard IV. For lodgings, I stayed at Mundemba

Camp in the house of Mr. S.I. Ngog, a great friend and worker under the Ndian V.A.C plantations, now Pamol Limited. Every morning from Monday to Friday, I trekked from the camp down to the V.A.C. beach where a canoe ferried us across to Ikassa Mission poised on a hill overlooking the Ndian River. On several occasions I used Mr. Ngog's bicycle to roll down to the beach. Humble as my first job was I enjoyed it. The pay was one pound fifteen shillings a month, while the Headmaster got two pounds ten shillings. In June, my examination results came out and my success raised my pay to three pounds. I drew arrears of pay, but created a problem for Father Doeswiek who may have found a way out of paying the deputy Headmaster more than his boss.

Early in 1947, I sailed for Lagos, the city of opportunity. My college mate at Calabar, Kio Abel Briggs who was already there had written urging me to come to Lagos. From Ndian to Calabar to Aba, I chose to travel by train from Aba to the North as far as Kaduna junction, then down to Lagos. This gave me the opportunity to see a good spread of Nigeria, East to North across the Benue and North to South across the majestic Niger. Indeed Lagos was the place. Yaba, one time on the outskirts of the city was now virtually in the centre of it, but the island itself over the Carter Bridge continued the place to be. Ikoyi remained an exclusive Government Reservation, while Apapa grew into the western spread of the city almost totally out of reclaimed marshland. The huge buses rumbling unending from end to end of the city and the taxis for those who could afford provided the first fascination to new comers like me from the provinces. At night, a peep into the night-clubs with dazzling lights and entertaining girls gave one the feel of Lagos at night.

I meet Zik

After the initial dazzle had worn off, I now tackled seriously the problem of a job and the first offer was that of a Reporter/ Correspondent for the famous Zik's Group of Newspapers, headed by the *West African Pilot*. This happened to be the time when Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, the journalist politician of Nigerian fame was thinking of establishing a newspaper in the Cameroons. Mr. Laban Namme, a budding Cameroonian journalist who had accompanied Zik during his visit through the Cameroons in 1946, soon contacted me to accept the

appointment of Reporter/Correspondent for the Zik's Press with the prospect of going back to the Cameroons to launch a Newspaper – *The Cameroon Voice* where Mr. Namme was to be Editor and I his Deputy. Mr. Namme promised to arrange for me to meet the great man Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe.

So it was that on the appointed day I was ushered in to meet Zik, the man in the flesh. A charming giant of a man standing some six feet plus off the ground, he had a magnetism that ran through you on meeting him, yet when he talked, there was a way he put one at ease, like the ease one enjoys by a father. He was pleased to meet me after hearing from Mr. Namme about me. He was thinking seriously of starting a newspaper in the Cameroons and would like me to join Mr. Namme to be its advance staff. For now we were to travel to the Cameroons and sound the people's readiness for the paper. We left Zik's office, Yaba, with a strong sense of mission to accomplish the objective of establishing the first newspaper in the Cameroons.

Cameroonians in Lagos were happy with the news and arranged a fitting send-off for Mr. Namme and I at Obalende Lagos. We soon sailed for Victoria with bundles of posters announcing the coming of the *Cameroon Voice*.

If Cameroonians in Lagos were happy with news of a paper for their people at home, those on the spot were excited even the more. We arranged to base ourselves at Victoria and Kumba for a start. Mr. Namme established himself in New Town, Victoria, while I pitched camp sixty-four miles north, at Kumba. Losing no time, we embarked on lecture tours to parts of the provinces from Victoria to Bamenda to sensitise the population on the coming paper. We put up our posters which served to announce the dates and places of our lectures. All along we sent off news items of interest from the Cameroons for publication in the *West African Pilot*.

Incidentally, this was the time when the politicians of Nigeria were manifesting great unrest with the constitution of their country (The Richards Constitution) which operated on the practice of nomination rather than the election of representatives to the Regional Assemblies and the Central Legislative Council. The NCNC had been founded and Zik had led a delegation in 1947 to London to meet the Colonial Secretary Sir Arthur Creech Jones, for a new more democratic constitution. They also asked for a date for Self-Government or Independence for Nigeria. The members of the delegation were:

Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe (leader)

Dr. Olorun Nimbe

Prince Adeleke Adedoyin Mallam Abubakar Dipcharima

Mrs Ransom Kuti Chief Nyong Esien Mr. P.M. Kale

Chapter Two

As Journalist with the Zik's Press

After the tour through the territory, Mr. Narnme stationed at Victoria and I at Kumba. From there I poured news to the *West African Pilot*, Lagos, and soon settled down as a regular Reporter/Correspondent for the Zik's Press. The popularity under which I was basking as the hard hitting *West African Pilot* Reporter/Correspondent of Kumba was soon rudely disturbed when I dared beard a certain administrative lion in his den.

I Face D.O. Newington

In Kumba, I met D.O. William Francis Hayes Newington in charge of the Division. Reportedly an ex-Cambridge Rugby Blue, D.O. Newington was a bit of a terror in the place. Standing a good six feet plus off the ground with broad shoulders and arms hanging down almost to his knees, he was an embodiment of strength, almost surplus to the requirements of a civil administrator. He thus spent more than a fair share of his duties on tours, trekking across his Division and engaging in a variety of activities and encounters not generally expected of an administrative officer. He was reported to have performed a number of outstanding feats like wrestling with local police toughs during morning drill, swimming across the raging Mungo River in the height of the rainy season, plunging into the creeks to swim in chase of Ijaw tax evaders resisting arrest, capturing and overpowering several of these men from the Niger Delta, to whom water was more familiar than land.

D.O. Newington had on one of his regular tours marched to the North West of the Division across the Rumpi heights into Ngolo-Batanga from where I spring, and ran into trouble with the local Village Heads. As was the custom, meetings were convened at the stopping points of the D.O.'s tour where the visitor addressed the people and listened to complaints. Some of the chiefs, more out of age and indolence than of spite, failed to attend the D.O.'s meetings and he took great offence at such conduct. He was understandably angry that after trekking for so many miles to meet these people, they could not walk the few miles from their villages to the place of his meeting.

He therefore took drastic action against such absentees from his meetings and had them charged under section 38(2) of the Native Authority Ordinance, Failing to attend a meeting convened by a "Competent Authority." On this fateful tour in 1948, D.O. Newington had charged some twelve chiefs and convicted them to a fine of five pounds or two months imprisonment with hard labour, he acting as magistrate and complainant at the same time. When he later travelled to the Bakossi area soon after the earlier rampage in the North West, he brought in Chief R. N. Charley to Kumba prison also on a sentence of two months imprisonment for failing to attend his meeting at Nyasoso. Chief Charley lived at Tombel nine miles away and Newington's policemen marched the chief all the way to his trial at Nyasoso. There, presiding as complainant and magistrate at the same time, he convicted Chief Charley to two months imprisonment, with hard labour, with no option of fine. As news spread that Chief Charley was being brought to prison in Kumba, there was a chill of horror across the entire population. Spearheaded by me, a committee of leading members of the Kumba community spontaneously went to work. The Chief Secretary Lagos, the Lieutenant Governor Enugu, the pro Lagos, the *West African Pilot* Lagos, the Resident Buea and the Judge High Court Calabar were immediately alerted on D.O.

Newington's atrocities in jailing Chief Charley and twelve other chiefs for merely not attending his meetings. Chief Charley, a former schoolteacher and former custom officer who was easily the most educated Natural Ruler in then British Cameroons was refused bail even though he had given notice of appeal. He was in prison for thirteen days when the results of our representation started pouring into Kumba. Several of the officials we had contacted queried D.O. Newington demanding explanation for his action and his office was soon flooded with such queries.

The height of the queries came in when the Judge High Court Calabar ordered that Chief Charley be released from prison forthwith, since section 38(2) of the Native Authority Ordinance under which the D.O. had acted was then obsolete. On this thirteenth day after Chief Charley had been clamped into jail, a policeman sent by D.O. Newington knocked at my door in Kumba town in great haste – D.O. Newington wanted to see me immediately. I asked why, but the officer could say no more; he had orders to bring me to the D.O.'s office but not under arrest. I wanted him to tell me if I was under arrest but he

was adamant that I was not. "Then go ahead, I will come up at my pace to see the D.O.," I replied. The policeman explained that he would be in trouble, if he did not arrive at the same time with me before the D.O.

This sounded like being marched before the D.O. and I resented it; but finally we struck a compromise with the police officer. In order not to look as if I was being marched, and in order for us to arrive together before the D.O., he offered me his bicycle to ride slowly while he walked by my side until we got to Mr. Newington's office. This gave a different impression from my being marched. Newington was in a terrible mood as I arrived his office. We stood at the veranda when he howled to the policeman "bring the fellow in." I appeared before the D.O. who was fuming like a wounded lion. He offered me no seat but raved at me to explain why I had sent out all these misleading stories about him regarding the Charley affair round the whole world. I started by querying why a policeman rather than a messenger should be sent to call me when I was not being investigated and was under no arrest, and ended by demanding a seat since I was not being tried by him. I saw him tickled to the limit and looking for the next move in the battle of wits between us, when a prison warder arrived at the veranda with Chief Charley, still wearing his prison uniform. This new development seemed to save both of us from the agony of our mini war of words and wits, as we turned to face the new arrivals.

"Bring the prisoner in" the D.O. howled. Chief Charley was marched in. Then Newington turning to me said, "You lied that I refused Charley bail. Who asked to bail him and I refused?" Chief Charley answered promptly, "You refused when people tried to bail me at Nyasoso." There was no direct contradiction from the D.O. who then turned to me and said, "If you wish to bail Charley, come and sign here." I quickly moved to his table and signed on a piece of paper that was pushed towards me. My mission for Chief Charley's freedom was too strong, I did not even bother to read whatever was written on the bail bond. As the truth came out later, Newington was at that moment already in receipt of the Calabar High Court telegram, ordering him to release the chief. The bail act was a mere face-saving device organised by D.O. Newington.

I walked away with Chief Charley to his freedom and the *West African Pilot*, a week later came out with the happy news of our victory in that round over Newington. Soon after, the Chief Secretary Lagos

announced that all the thirteen chiefs whom D.O. Newington had jailed were granted Royal Pardon and the appropriate certificates were issued to them. The fines were cancelled and those who had served the two months I.H.L. were paid compensation. Then Mr. W.F.H. Newington was moved rather abruptly to Degema Division in the creeks of the Niger Delta. His atrocities there among the Kalabari and the Ijaw tribesmen are another story that may not concern this record. That story may be for others to tell. However, Chief R.N. Charley sued D.O. Newington in the High Court Calabar for wrongful imprisonment, but lost on the ground that Newington had been acting in his capacity as the Chief Executive Officer of Kumba Division and therefore could not be personally liable for errors committed during the performance of his duties. Chief Charley still won his point that he was the first Cameroonian to take a D.O. to court.

However my contact with D.O. Newington appears to have had a happy ending which must go on record. From Degema this man of fire later retired from the Civil Service and found his way back to his home in the south of England. Twenty-three years later in 1971 I was in London on a working holiday as Secretary of State for Primary Education West Cameroon. One of my interests was to find out where some of the early D.O.s and administrators in Kumba were, if they were still alive. Through the Commonwealth Office my inquiries revealed that D.O. Anderson who had discovered me as a little kid from my village in 1933 had died at Enugu in 1941. D.O. V.K. Johnson who had awarded me a Kumba N.A. scholarship in 1940 was still alive but was at that time down with a bout of flu and could not make it to see me but my friend W.F.H. Newington was fit and hale and was coming to London to honour my invitation.

So at last after 23 years he was still fit and hale and at 65 he was still working as a salesman in a shop. In the Royal Kensington Hotel, London, on Friday night November n,” 1971, Mr. Newington was my guest of honour to a party with Barrister M.M. Noto and Mrs Balike Noto. One can well imagine our joy at seeing Mr. Newington again. Truly, time has a way of healing old wounds; but here it was even more. Time had mellowed me into appreciating fuller, the spirit that had moved D.O. Newington in 1948, to have been so impatient with the pace of development in Kumba, and to have been that hard with all who showed reluctance at falling into line. He too, did realise with all the humour in which the English are gifted, that the small black

youth to whom he once refused a seat in his office in Kumba, had risen to the status of a Minister in the Government of his country.



Adversaries re-united (left to right) Barrister MM Noto, Retired DO W.F.H Newington, Mrs Balike Noto, Hon. NN Mbile, at the Royal Kensington Hotel London, 11th November, 1971.

Meanwhile the *Cameroon Voice* project turned out a dream that never came true. After waiting for months on end in vain, my colleague Mr. Namme sailed to Lagos to find out what was happening with the project. He did not return. I waited for eight months and could hear no word, so in the end all the storm we had raised about the *Cameroon Voice* ended like the historic South Sea Bubble. As God works in His mysterious ways, His wonders to perform destiny now dictated a new course that bent my steps towards other horizons.

Now while my encounters with tyrant Newington were going on in 1948, another doughty Cameroonian Dr. E.M.L. Endeley had been wrestling lower south with the problem of the workers of the Cameroon Development Corporation, where he was the General Secretary of the CDC Workers Union. It would be recalled that after the end of the Second World War, the former German plantations were grouped and run jointly by the Government-sponsored Cameroon Development Corporation employing a work force of some 25,000 men. A trade union for this large number of workers had begun as far back as 1946 or there about, and Dr. Endeley who had come home from Lagos soon found himself helping to organise it as their General Secretary. Mr. L.E. Jones-Mensah, a Ghanaian and a distinguished staff of the Corporation, was the President of the Union. The workers, however, preferred to have all officials of the Union strictly as their paid employees and the thinking therefore was to have a new paid General Secretary while H. Endeley was to move up as President of the Union.

In February 1949, the Union dispatched a delegation to sound my opinion, if I could accept the post of General Secretary while Dr. Endeley would be President. I considered the offer favourably and on the 25th of February 1949. in the Holtforth Hall, Tiko I was elected General Secretary of the CDC Workers Union in succession to Dr. Endeley who in turn was elected President. It is interesting that, the workers employed their staff by electing them. A new chapter thus opened to me in the job of trade unionist to the 25,000 workers of the Cameroons plantations, and here I embraced a whole range of fresh

experiences that were greatly to stand me in good stead later in life. My youth and drive coupled with my devouring interest found me ideally cut for the job. In no time, I and other union officials had toured the entire estates of the CDC to meet the workers and to talk to them on the meaning of a workers union and the purpose of collective bargaining for their rights.

The management staff in the CDC were mainly expatriate, with only some six Africans amongst them. This compared poorly with the more than two hundred expatriates. The lesser paid workers, more than twenty-five thousand strong, were the main force though only in terms of numbers. Most of the general labour did not really realise what a Union meant to them, and to most, the Union idea was as much an imposition as the CDC itself. Workers were reluctant to pay their Union dues except when a strike was pending or in progress, and we found ourselves sometimes virtually fighting the workers for Union dues in order to pay our staff and run the Secretariat. Yet a lot was required to be done. The basic daily wage in 1949 was one shilling and six pence, hardly enough to provide a square meal for one bachelor. Most workers could not afford school fees for their children, and they had to pay for their medical needs, when ever they got ill even on the job. Life was hard and the workers groaned under the yoke of the paltry one shilling six pence a day wage. However, by the end of 1949, we had drilled the men sufficiently for our first clash with the CDC.

“Crawley Must Go”

That first clash came in our demand for the removal of a Mr. J.C. Crawley, one of the top officials in the Corporation. He was alleged to be anti-African, extremely cocky, and suspected always of mis-advising the Chairman, Mr. F.E.V. Smith. Mr. Smith had been former Development Secretary Lagos who goes on record as the man who tabled the Cameroon Development Corporation Ordinance, 1946, before the Nigerian Legislative Council. We splashed Crawley's name all over the place on posters, and other communication points, demanding his removal. The CDC did not remove Crawley, but there is no doubt that they realised that the Union had arrived at a point where it could at least bark. On our part the Crawley affair served as a fitting rehearsal to the feud that was soon to engulf the Corporation and the Union.

Indeed it did not take long for us to demonstrate that despite its youth the Union had arrived as a force to be reckoned with. We had filed a number of demands before the Corporation for consideration, increase in the basic wage from one shilling and six pence to two shillings and six pence a day; schools for workers' children; hospitals for their medical needs; subsidised food rations on the German model; workers shops at controlled prices. The arguments had been carefully submitted to the Corporation and its favourable action solicited. Yet, either out of ignorance of our fighting strength or the usual arrogance of the aristocratic colonial employer, the CDC failed to give our case the attention it deserved. Our notice to them declaring a trade dispute was virtually ignored. When the deadline expired our action took them by virtual surprise. In early December 1949, we struck, and an unprepared CDC reeled before us, hardly knowing what to do. By some coincidence, the 1949 Visiting Mission of the United Nations Trusteeship Council landed in the Cameroons just when our twenty-five thousand workers laid down tools in a most effective strike. All the teeming plantations from Victoria and Tiko to Mbonge and Tombel fell silent. Ships arriving with essential goods docked off Bota with no one to attend to them; banana boats docking at Tiko to collect fruit found the once busy docks as silent as a grave yard. As the days ran into weeks, the CDC became visibly worried for bananas were beginning to ripen on the trees and some twelve ships were already lying idle off Bota with valuable cargo on board.

A Desperate CDC Move

We were two long weeks into the strike and nerves on both sides were getting strained. The CDC were now clearly under pressure to off load the ships in Victoria harbour. When all effort to get us move proved abortive, the CDC turned to the Elders and Fyffes who owned the Likomba Estate, with three thousand workers for help. Elders and Fyffes itself appeared to consent to the request from CDC for their men to off load the ships off Bota, but news of this leaked to our Bota men. Without even consulting the Union leaders at Buea, the boys went to work. At about 8:00 p. m. nine hundred of them poured out of their camps, armed with cutlasses, spears, sticks and lanterns. They took possession of the Bota- Victoria road cutting off all movement there to await the arrival of the E&F men, and give them the reception

they deserved. Virtually closing the Victoria-Bota road from the Limbe stream near the zoo, the boys were in no mood for any nonsense. It was already reported that a Senior Police Officer and Mr. Smith, Chairman CDC, had been prevented from travelling by road between Bota and Victoria and Mr. Smith had only used a motor boat to reach Victoria from Bota. Tension was high in Victoria and Buea was alerted on the situation.

It is at this juncture that at about mid-night, Dr. Endeley, President of the CDC Workers' Union, and I, Secretary General, were summoned to appear before Chief Endeley in his palace at Buea. We were surprised to find Resident D.A.F. Shute waiting for us in Chief Endeley's sitting room at such an odd hour of the night, but soon the reason for the meeting began to unfold. Resident Shute, breaking the ice, went straight to the point. He had come despite the lateness of the hour to inform us that our men at Bota had run off control and had illegally occupied the Victoria-Bota road. We would be well advised to disperse them from there before it was six o'clock in the morning as the Government was not going to tolerate such conduct from our men. He ended with the stern warning that if by 6 o'clock a.m. the men were not moved, Government shall take appropriate action. As soon as he had finished saying this, he walked out leaving Chief Endeley, Dr. Endeley and myself behind. We fully realised the awkward situation into which the men had put us and after a brief discussion, I volunteered to leave immediately for Bota.

The only means of transport available to us was my Raleigh bicycle, which had no light, but by fitting a lantern securely in front of the bike, I rattled gently down over the loose stones and dust that were a feature of the Buea-Victoria road at that time. Being familiar with the roads, I chose the longer twenty-two mile course via Mutengene rather than the fourteen miles through Saxenhoff. The longer road was easier and in two hours I hit Victoria. Soon I was pedalling my way past the rustling banks of Limbe towards my destination at Bota, but before I got to the Limbe bridge near the present police offices and Crystal Garden Night Club, I was halted by two sharp looking men holding sticks and brandishing torch lights. In seconds they recognised me and told me who they were, they were the scouts of the CDC strikers waiting for the E&F men. Soon I was ushered to the centre of the waiting men.

They presented a staggering sight. Hundreds of men were lying

across the tarmac in heaps for something like three hundred yards while hundreds of others stood, sat or lay on both sides of the road deep amongst the low bush and grass. Almost every man held one type of implement or the other: stick, spear, cutlass; but the oddest carried by each man was a lighted lantern. What a spectacle! The road and the surrounding bush blazing with hundreds of lighted lanterns, the dark figures of the men, some in groups, others apart, standing amongst the low bush and grass. All these against the dark background of the African night, presented a picture few have ever beheld. When a whistle sounded, and a loud voice announced that the General Secretary had arrived from Buea with a most important piece of news and that every body was to move immediately to the water tank, a sea of lights and men began to move.

In about one hour, we were all gathered round the water tank, our usual meeting place; the men, their weapons and their lamps blazing across the hill on which the water tank perches. Standing on the water tank, I addressed the men in a few solemn words "My brothers in the struggle for a mere crumb of bread for the stomachs of our hungry children and ourselves, please listen to me. I left Buea two hours ago with an important message for you. As all around us is pitch darkness and we cannot see if the enemy is hiding in the dark to hear our secrets; I shall announce the message to you only at 7 a.m. tomorrow morning at this same place. For now everybody should go home and sleep peacefully in your bed. The enemy has been beaten again."

There was a thunderous applause and the men slowly melted away into the darkness, to their homes. At 7 a.m. they were streaming back. This time they were not clad in their clothes of war, they held no weapons and no lamps; for the December sun was up and bright. The message to the men was short – "The men of Elders and Fyffes had been asked to come to take our jobs and off-load the ships lying in harbour, but they have refused to come and have instead sent a message of solidarity with us in the struggle against the CDC." The ovation was deafening and the cheering lasted for minutes. The CDC as well as the British Administration were both soundly condemned in their partnership to exploit suffering masses of our African people in order to provide cheap raw materials for the factories of Europe. How could the African worker continue to tolerate a situation where the salary of a single white man was equal to that of one hundred blacks.

The strike went into the third and fourth week with each side

holding its ground. The Administration, conscious of the traditional respect for their chiefs in the African, at one time, tried to end the strike through the intervention of chiefs. A meeting was convened by the Government, of the leading chiefs from both Cameroons and Bamenda provinces to meet the workers representatives and persuade them return to work. But after listening to our case in the Buea Customary Court Hall, even the chiefs were amazed at the pittance constituting our basic wage. In the end, they openly told the Administration that two shillings and six pence basic wage a day and the other demands of the workers appeared reasonable. The result of the chiefs meeting was a psychological boost to our case, and did little to lend support to that of the CDC. The Corporation came off badly as their spokesmen were no match to the Union representatives in winning public moral support for our point of view.

As the costly strike wore on and both sides were getting weary of the war, the CDC and ourselves each tried its hand to strike a winning blow. At one time the CDC informed one of our small isolated areas, Molyko, that the strike was over and some of the men were taken out to the field to commence work. A smart worker ran up from Molyko to inform us at Union Headquarters that the Molyko men were out working in the banana fields. I immediately pedalled down on my faithful Raleigh bicycle and met the men actually working in the field. In a few minutes they had cleaned their machetes and were expressing profound regrets for having allowed themselves to be fooled that the strike was over. On our part, the Union also sent out a ploy ostensibly as a secret message but actually intended for the enemy. It was that we were preparing the entire workers to go home for Christmas and New Year, and to stay home indefinitely until the CDC accepted our demands.

Now, either through our strong propaganda to demoralise our opponent, or through the heavy loss that the Corporation was sustaining, Lagos stepped in just before Christmas. The Commissioner of Labour, Lagos, flew in with his team of advisers and soon full talks began between representatives of the CDC and the Union. The Union demands were debated in detail and in some five days of talks, the CDC came out with its offer; of the 2 shillings and six pence basic daily wage demanded by the workers, the Corporation agreed to pay one shilling and ten pence. They agreed to establish CDC schools, hospitals, workers' shops and to issue weekly rations at subsidised

prices to workers. There was a general revision of salaries for the higher paid wage earners as well as the monthly paid employees. Above all, the Corporation accepted to step up the number of Africans in the Senior Service. All told we came out with quite a bag full of gains for the workers, at the end of the 1949 strike.

There is no doubt in my mind however that we did not achieve more, especially on the basic wage issue, because the Union leaders had not yet acquired sufficient skill in the art of collective bargaining through protracted haggling. I personally hold the view that had we pressed for more, following that initial offer, we may have got more than the four pence basic rise. Both Dr. Endeley and myself as amateur trade unionists must be given due credit that we could however imperfectly, match the bargaining skill of the CDC, the Department of Labour and the British Administration, to come out with what we did. In the strike itself we must be given full marks that for the first time in the then history of Nigeria and the Cameroons, this was the longest strike ever conducted without the incidence of violence. On this we received glowing tribute from no less a personality than Mr. F.E.V. Smith, first Chairman CDC when he addressed the closing session of the week long CDC Union talks presided over by the Commissioner of Labour. It was around this same period when 21 coal miners were shot dead at Enugu during disturbances and strike.

The post strike years found the CDC a vastly transformed industrial concern. From the bitter lessons learned during the strike, there emerged a new society in which considerable mutual respect reigned between the Corporation and the Union. Consultative Committees to handle industrial disputes were established all over the estates, while the central Joint Committee sat at Bota. These Committees comprising representatives from both the CDC and Workers Union and presided over by the Labour Officer, Buea henceforth handled many problems which otherwise may have developed into explosive disputes. The union itself gained considerable strength and regard from the workforce, after the conflict. At the Annual Conference in February 1950, delegates spoke proudly of their individual and union achievements during this now historic one-month conflict with the CDC.

One stunning event that almost marred the Conference of February 1950 in the Holtforth Hall, Tiko was the resignation of Dr. Endeley from the office of President of the CDC Workers Union for

“personal reasons.” Delegates found it hard to contain the departure of their President, but Dr. Endeley maintained that his resignation was irrevocable. However, when a few weeks later news leaked out that Dr. Endeley had been appointed a member of the CDC Board of Directors, the reason behind his resignation no longer remained a secret. At election time, I was proposed for the post of President of the CDC Workers Union and won with an overwhelming majority against one Mr. Divine. As delegates ate and drank at the feast that traditionally ended each Union Conference, there flowed lusty discussion on a number of topics – Had the Union truly become a force to reckon with in the Cameroons plantations? Would the CDC implement all the points agreed at the talks? Would the dream of our leaders to see Africans one day in control of the management of the Corporation ever come true? Some fifty years later, most of these questions have long been answered in a manner that far exceeds the vision of the greatest optimists at the time.

By December 1951, the country was ready for its first general elections. It had been agreed, at the end of the exercise since 1948 that revised the Richards Constitution from its unpopular system of nominating representatives, to that of Sir John Macpherson which introduced the more democratic selection of parliamentarians through elections, to have three Regions, Eastern Region with Headquarters at Enugu, Western Region with Headquarters at Ibadan and Northern Region with Headquarters at Kaduna. Each Region was to have a House of Assembly and the Federal Capital of Lagos was to seat the House of Representatives.

Each Region was to have its Regional Government headed by the Governor of that Region and an African Leader of Government Business from the party that controlled majority in the Regional Legislature.

In Lagos the Federal Government was headed by the Governor General and the Regions by Governors. The system of elections commenced with electors from Districts constituting an electoral meeting at the Divisional level which elected a number of members calculated on population basis, to the Regional Houses of Assembly. The Houses of Assembly then constituting themselves into electoral meetings elected members to the House of Representatives, Lagos, from amongst their numbers.

At the end of the exercise, the Eastern and Western Houses of Assembly, were each with 80 elected members while the Northern House of Assembly had some 134 members. The Regional Houses acting as electoral colleges, sent to the House of Representatives in Lagos the members to that House in the following proportion: from the Eastern House of Assembly, 34 members; Western House of Assembly, 34 members; Northern House of Assembly, 68 members. At Enugu the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons NCNC party controlled 75 out of the 80 members of the House. The opposition, National Independence Party (NIP) had the other 5 members. All the 13 Cameroon members declared for the NCNC. The constitution had made special provision for the Trust Territory of

British Cameroons within the Eastern Region of Nigeria. Here at least four members out of those from the Trust Territory were to be elected to the House of Representatives in Lagos. Also out of the thirteen Trust Territory members, at least one of them was to be a member of the Eastern Region Government at Enugu. Of the four in the House of Representatives in Lagos one was to be a member of the Federal Government. These special provisions had been won by the far more politically alert spokesmen from Cameroon and Bamenda provinces at the several stages of the talks that finally launched the Macpherson Constitution after the Ibadan Conference of January 1951. No such provision was made for the British Cameroons territory then administered under Adamawa and Bornu Provinces of Northern Nigeria. The elections of December 1951 were an outcome of the Macpherson Constitution put into full effect and they produced the following results in respect of the Cameroon and Bamenda Provinces:

1. Victoria Division

Dr. E.M.L. Endeley

Mr. P.N. Motomby-Woleta

2. Kumba Division

Mr. N.N. Mbile

Chief R.N. Charley

3. Mamfe Division

Mr. S .A. George

Mr. M.N. Forju

4. Bamenda Division

Mr. S.T. Muna

Mr. V.T. Lainjo

Mr. J.N. Foncha

5. Wum Division

Rev. J.C. Kangsen

Prince Sarna Ndi

6. Nkambe Division

Mr. J.T. Ndze

Mr. A.T. Ngala

Mr. S.T. Muna was appointed a member of the Eastern Region Executive Council, in charge of the Ministry of Works, while Dr. E.M.L. Endeley was appointed a member of the Federal Council of

Ministers without portfolio in Lagos.

Of the 34 representatives from Enugu in the House of Representatives, the following six came from the Cameroons:

1. Victoria Division: Dr. E.M.L. Endeley
2. Kumba Division: Mr N.N. Mbile
3. Mamfe Division: Mr S.A. George
4. Bamenda Division: Mr V.T. Lainjo
5. Wum Division: Rev. J.C. Kangsen
6. Nkambe Division: Mr J.T. Ndze

Things looked settled now and the members applied themselves seriously to the tasks that they had sworn to perform on behalf of their constituencies. So the year 1952 saw the Macpherson Constitution in steady progress, but this placid run of things in that year was later reversed by a constitutional crisis that engulfed the Eastern House of Assembly early in 1953.

The process of the final elections from the Divisions to the Houses of Assembly to the House of Representatives in Lagos including the initial sittings of both houses took from December 1951 to about April 1952. The thirteen Cameroon members had met at Mamfe early January on their way to Enugu. At a private caucus we attempted selecting the four members guaranteed the Trust Territory in the constitution. Endeley, George, Muna and Ndze had been chosen but when we got to Enugu, and we had declared for the NCNC in the Eastern House, our position greatly improved. In the NCNC party caucus it was resolved that of the thirty-four members for election to Lagos, every Division was to be represented. There were twenty-nine Divisions in the Region, so the Cameroonians got six seats to the House of Representatives on the basis of our six Divisions. The other five seats (34-29) were distributed to certain NCNC leaders from the East who had not come in through the Divisional selection.

In the Lagos Government, the NCNC team included Mr. A.C. Nwapa, Mr. Okoi Arikpo, Dr. Eni Njoku and Or. E.M.L. Endeley; the Action Group had S.L. Akintola, Bode Thomas, Sir Aderemi (the Oni of Ife) and ... while the Northern People's Congress (NPC) Ministers were Abubakar Tafewa Balewa (who became Prime Minister of Nigeria), Mohamadu Ribadu, Sir Osman Nagogo (Emir of Katsina)

and Alhadji Inua Wada. The arrival of the members of the House of Representatives to the metropolis of Lagos added a new dimension to the social elite of the city. From the East and West came thirty-four members each, while half of the House, sixty-eight members in all, came from the Northern Region. The House of Representatives in session presented a unique and picturesque demonstration in life of the much talked of 'unity in diversity' of Nigeria. The northerners in their flowing robes and turbans, the westerners in the well known Yoruba agbadas rich and colourful and the easterners largely in western style suits with a sprinkling of the eastern traditional dress of rich loin cloth to the ankles with a beautifully embroidered loose upper garment reaching down the waist just below the level of an English jacket. A few of the small number of Cameroonian members brought their colour to the august assembly, in the brightly embroidered Bamenda gowns. A number of white officials sat among the government bench holding strategic portfolios in the Central Government. Such was the setting in the House of Representatives. As all these members sat with poise and dignity to deliberate on the affairs of the Colony of Lagos, the Protectorate of Nigeria and the Trust Territory of the Cameroons, it seemed clear that a great milestone in the political and constitutional progress of this part of Africa had been reached.

Home Coming for an M.P

The opening meetings of the Regional Houses at Enugu, Ibadan and Kaduna and the House of Representatives in Lagos early in 1952 came and went and looked well set for a smoother sailing of the Macpherson Constitution than had been the fate of the earlier one of Arthur Richards which it replaced. Little could anyone foresee of the turbulent constitutional waters that lay ahead in the path of the Nigerian ship of state now gliding elegantly across the waves. At the Regional level, there were the three Houses of Assembly, each with a Government and Leaders of Government Business; then there was the Federal House of Representatives in Lagos comprising MPs drawn from the members of Regional Houses. Then there were members of the Federal Executive Council of Ministers, four from each of the three Regions appointed from amongst the members from that Region, and on top of the pyramid was poised the Governor as President of the Federal Council of Ministers. He also sat as President

of the House of Representatives. The special provision for at least one seat in the Federal Executive Council being reserved for one of the members of the House of Representatives from the Trust Territory of the Cameroons, was scrupulously respected, Dr. E.M.L. Endeley had been thus appointed a member of the Federal Executive Council, as Minister without portfolio.

On a day in April 1952, I think it was the 27th of that month, I boarded a plane from Lagos to Tiko after the House of Representatives had adjourned sine die. In some four hours after stopping at Port Harcourt and Calabar for refuelling and to discharge or take on passengers, we came into view of the green plains of Tiko and its airport that marked the end of the trip. We touched ground and the big bird taxied to a stop in front of the airport building, the passengers happily coming down the stairway to be embraced by waiting friends and relatives who had come to welcome them and take them away. I was no less received than the others, for there waiting for me with a car standing by was a young administrative officer, A.D.O. Mr Dennis Hayden from the District Office, Victoria. We sped away to Victoria from where after dropping Mr. Hayden, the car continued with me to Kumba, my home and destination.

My Father's Exit

However, the joy of homecoming was soon swept away as my house looked empty and desolate, my young wife with our first son having left for my village. My father had died. As the servant came in to report that the man had passed away some four days before, I faced the harsh fact that I had lost my closest person in life. For indeed my father had become more than a father; he had borne my burden long beyond my school years; beyond the point where most men cease to be a charge on their parents. Here was the man who despite the limited resources of the village economy in the thirties and forties had pushed me along with the further aid of government scholarships. He had sacrificed all he had for me to obtain a good college education from the best institutions of learning in Eastern Nigeria. Those with the appropriate sense of value on the matter will confirm that Umuahia Government College and Hope Waddell Training Institute, Calabar were amongst the leading colleges of Nigeria east of the River Niger.

The next morning I was off to Lipenja, my village home, where I met my wife and the rest of the family in deep mourning. My arrival was greeted with renewed wailing which had gone on for days- the women sitting on mats on bare earth floors and wailing with a fresh burst as each new relative and friend of the deceased arrived to join in the mourning. My grief was extreme as with this visual evidence of the death of my father, Mbile wa Ngembeni, even the idle thoughts which occasionally crossed my mind as I trekked to the village, that the whole thing could be a dream or a hoax, vanished.

The loss of my father shook me terribly on one score more than on anything else. I had been robbed of the opportunity to show him the gratitude that his care and effort to bring me up and give me a good education deserved. I learnt that when the election results had come out in December 1951, and I had been elected to Parliament, my father had been invaded by throngs of his home friends and our well-wishers who came to rejoice with him. He naturally went into great expense to entertain these crowds of visitors. Hardly knowing what his son had won, he had depended on the interpretations he got from story tellers of what it meant to win elections to the House of Assembly and the House of Representatives. No doubt, as he poured out his joyous reaction in the entertainment he gave to all comers, he had hoped to meet me in our own good time to hear from the horse's mouth what exactly I had become. But this was not to be for providence had ordained otherwise. My father was stricken ill with pneumonia in April 1952, and after thirteen days in bed, passed away only days of my return from Lagos from my maiden session of the House of Representatives. How true it is that few ever live to enjoy the fruits of their labour.

The funeral celebrations revived in vigour when I arrived as the family had held up several items pending my homecoming. As a matter of fact, visiting home for the first time since winning my new position as M.P., and now as chief mourner, I was the centre of the celebrations. The village folk took advantage of the celebrations to initiate me into membership of certain traditional societies prominent amongst which was the 'ekpe'. A good three weeks was spent in the village in all the diverse functions and parts that mark the funeral celebrations of a local celebrity such as my father was. With time I got reconciled to the hard fact with which I have learnt to live, that indeed my father was gone for aye.

The activities consequent upon my father's exit having subsided, I returned to my headquarters in Kumba to pursue the diverse calls that constituted the duties of a parliamentarian. Soon we were off to Enugu, then to Lagos and back to Kumba again. Forward and backward we travelled between our constituencies and the Legislative Houses as our new duties as lawmakers demanded. Then there were the tours in our constituencies which were often arduous and exacting.

Of course there were the lighter moments in our new job that had given us the title of "Honourable Member". A new elite had come to the society and the "Honourable Member" had indeed arrived. In the cocktail parties that were becoming the fashion, "Honourable Members" were often high in the list of invitees. Their wives too were coming along, as the lady partners of the new members of high society. At Enugu and Lagos, the Honourable Members were there at the Governor's and Ministers' parties, and in the country as a whole it had become the order of the day for them to grace social occasions with their presence. Amongst the members themselves new friendships and affinities began to develop, following discovery of common interests and accords between them. I soon found such a man in the person of Peter Motomby-Woleta who with Dr. E.M.L. Endeley had been elected from Victoria Division. Peter was henceforth one with whom I shared common interests and relations right to his early grave in March 1962. All went well with the Honourable Members in their new positions. The Christmas parties of 1952 found these new elite of the society all over the country playing their new role of bearers of the light. All this however, was like the calm that precedes the storm as subsequent events were soon to show.

In January 1953, the legislatures began their early sessions. The Eastern House of Assembly was called and its members converged into Enugu. As was the custom, party caucuses always held their parliamentary group meetings preparatory to the opening of the sessions. The NCNC parliamentary group in the Eastern House of Assembly convened, this time with a difference. The party leader Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, president of the NCNC and member for Lagos in

the Western House of Assembly had flown in and was presiding over the party's National Executive Committee of which I was a member. One item of business on the agenda of that party meeting appeared strong and contentious.

It involved the question of a possible reshuffle of the Eastern Regional Government. The Eastern Regional Government of nine ministers then referred to as the Eyo Ita Government had been sworn in early 1952, only days of the coming together of the elected members following the general elections of December 1951. Most members were meeting themselves for the first time in their lives, so that the recommendations for appointment of the NCNC Ministers were based often on very limited knowledge of those selected. It was observed during 1952, that the performance of several of these ministers fell short of the expectations of the NCNC. The party therefore decided to reshuffle the government despite its stay in office for only twelve months. Indeed when weighed against the ideology and principles for which the NCNC stood, it was intolerable to continue with men whose performance constituted a grave contradiction to the cause of the party especially as this was the first ever NCNC controlled Government in Nigeria.

The party was therefore impelled either to acquiesce to the open charge of failure or take the bold step to put things right by weeding out misfits and putting in those with capacity to project the true spirit and purpose of the party. In this the National Executive Committee had no choice; it had to do the right thing. In a long drawn out meeting from 5 p.m. to 3 a.m., the National Executive Committee (N.E.C.) of the NCNC finally decided to reshuffle the cabinet of the Government of the Eastern Region.

In practice six of the nine ministers were dropped (Eyo Ita, E.I. on, R.1. Uzoma, S.J. Una, S.W. Ubani-Ukoma, J.E. Koripamo). Three were retained to serve in the new government (Dr. M.I. Okpara, Mr. S.T. Muna and Mr. M.C. Awgu). The new list of the Eastern Government as decided by the NCNC was now to be as follows: Dr. K.O. Mbadiwe, Dr. Nwafor Orizu, Dr. M.I. Okpara, Mr. S.T. Muna, Mr. M. C. Awgu, Mr. E.O. Eyo, Mr. Tom Birabi, Mr. B.C. Oku and Mr. N. N. Mbile. There was a significant distinction in this new arrangement. The Cameroons was now to have two ministers in the Eastern Region Government instead of one as before (Honourable N.N. Mbile – Minister of Development and Honourable S.T. Muna –

Minister without Portfolio).

To effect the reshuffle, it had been decided, consistent with practice that all members of the Government first tender their resignation to the party. These were handed to Dr. Azikiwe to present to the Lieutenant Governor John Clement Pleass in the morning before the House of Assembly opened.

By 9 a.m. on the fateful day just before members began taking their seats in the Assembly for opening, there was ugly news in the air. The NCNC parliamentary wing was hurriedly summoned by the whips, to hear the news brought back from the Governor by Dr. Azikiwe. As we filed into the Committee Room, there was evidence of something unpleasant on the faces of most members. Dr. Azikiwe himself looked grim and as he addressed the silent party caucus, his voice sounded broken and emotional. At last the news came out. The six Ministers who had been dropped from the new list had gone to the Governor at 6 a.m. that morning, two hours before Dr. Azikiwe arrived with his list, and informed him that they had been forced to resign as Ministers against their will. So they had come to tell the Governor that they had no intention of relinquishing their posts. The Governor therefore had advised them to write disclaiming their resignations which Dr. Azikiwe was carrying, and this they had done. When therefore Dr. Azikiwe arrived at 8 a.m. before the Governor, the Ministers had forestalled him, and the Governor refused his list. The members listened silently to the embarrassing experience of Dr. Azikiwe but such silence was like the moments before the declaration of war. Minutes later there exploded a stormy reaction from members of the NCNC parliamentary wing, and the now historic Eastern crisis of 1953 had begun.

Member after member rose to condemn the cowardly men who had disgraced the name of the NCNC and of the black race before the Lieutenant Governor and the world. They poured out all their vehemence against the ministers for telling the Governor such an untruth as that they had been forced to resign. It was contended that the party had the right to reshuffle the cabinet which it had proposed to Government and it was held that the Governor had no right to keep men who no longer enjoyed the confidence of the party that put them in office. When the members had let off a good deal of their initial steam of dissent with the Ministers and the Governor, it was agreed that the matter be taken to the open House of the Assembly so that

the loyal members could face the cowardly rebels on the floor of the House. Governor Pleass who was President of the Assembly had already arrived, but he couldn't commence business since the NCNC majority members were all in the Committee Room. The six Ministers and the National Independence Party (N.I.P) opposition of only five members could not form a quorum as required by the standing orders of the House, to enable business to commence.

Shortly, however, the NCNC men started pouring in. You could see the rage in their eyes and the grim on their faces as they took their places. There was no doubt of the impending war that was going to commence in only a few minutes, across the floor of the Eastern House of Assembly. Yet, no one, not even the most farsighted, could forecast the ultimate outcome of the grave crisis that was clearly building up. Governor Pleass, as President of the House, commenced proceedings with the usual ceremonies. He inspected a Guard of Honour, and was ushered into the chambers of the House in the usual way. There were three loud bangs at the door behind the 'throne' and at the end of the third, the Sergeant at Arms opened the door and the President walked in with poise and dignity to the throne as the members all rose from their seats. The President and members all still standing, the usual prayers were recited by one of the Reverend gentlemen members of the House. At the conclusion of prayers the President and members took their seats, preparatory to the commencement of business.

It is at this juncture that one of the whips, Dr. K.O. Mbadiwe rose in his seat and citing the standing orders, drew the attention of the President and the members of the House to the need to suspend all official business in order to address a matter of grave public importance. Quoting his authority from the Standing Orders of the House, he informed the House of the serious matter of the resignation of all the Ministers in order for the party in power to reshuffle the Government of the Eastern Region. Proceeding, the member informed the Assembly of how six of the nine men who had earlier resigned their appointments to the party shamelessly went to the Governor purporting to withdraw their resignations. Dr. Mbadiwe then contended that the constitution only provided for resignations but said nothing about withdrawal of such resignations. In the circumstance, as far as the majority of the members of the House were concerned, as far as all lovers of truth and decent behaviour were concerned, the

resignation of the six men from the Executive stood, and these men were no longer Ministers nor were they any longer competent to present official business to the House. At the conclusion of his speech another member seconded the motion and made his own speech in the same vein as the first speaker. The motion having been moved and duly seconded, the House engaged in a lively debate.

On the other side, the members of the opposition (National Independence Party) rose to oppose the motion and in their speeches they poured praises on the Ministers for standing by their conscience not to resign. The members of the N.I.P. comprised a small but highly skilled group of eminent personalities: Dr. Alvan Ikoku, Dr. Francis Ibiam, Sir Louis Mbanefo, Reverend Okon Effiong and it must be recorded here as a matter of fact that, though small in number, the ability of members of the opposition was far higher than even the best of our NCNC men. Alvan Ikoku, for instance, was a flawless speaker with a great command of the English language. Dr. Ibiam was a virtual philosopher. Sir Louis Mbanefo was a distinguished lawyer. Many of us in the NCNC were young and green parliamentarians and prior to the crisis, we learnt a great deal from the style and eloquence of some of the eminent members of the opposition, most of whom had been members of the former Eastern House of Assembly and Legislative Council. On the NCNC side we had numbers, revolution, dynamism and the majority; but clearly the opposition had quality.

Yet here was a matter in which eloquence and rhetoric could not carry far. Here were six members of the NCNC party who no longer enjoyed its confidence and neither the opposition, the Governor nor their own six voices could do much to keep them in office. The debate ran long and strong, taking virtually the whole day, and when the ‘question was put’ the NCNC won by a huge majority. But at the end of this first round none knew that the gruesome fight on the floor of the Eastern House of Assembly would last three tedious weeks.

News of the crisis was now on every lip, in the newspapers and on all other media of information, and the public galleries of the Assembly were packed. Dr. Azikiwe himself sat in the distinguished visitors’ gallery for the first few days of the crisis. Each day the House opened with the usual ceremonies but when any of the “sit tight” Ministers rose to present any official business, there was a prompt motion from the NCNC floor opposing that business, and at the end of the ensuing debate, the motion opposing the official business was adopted. By this

process the NCNC floor effectively blocked all official business presented and the crisis raged on. Meanwhile a number of incidents took place. The National Independence Party opposition and the six “sit tight” ministers launched a new party, United National Independence Party (UNIP). The new party became quite a threat to the National Council majority as some members of the NCNC started defecting and joining the new party. The defectors rose in their seats to announce that they had resigned from the NCNC and declared for the UNIP. Such carpet crossing took place almost daily, and each fallen comrade sent a chill through our NCNC ranks. The NCNC fought back and some of the members retraced their steps and came back to the fold. Yet, it became clear that we were losing members to the opposition through carpet crossing.

At a crucial period during the crisis, the NCNC group tabled a motion of “no confidence” on the six “sit tight” rebels. The motion was debated for days. It is here that the debating skill and experience of some of the U.N.I.P. members came into play. The motion of “no confidence” was taken most seriously and it was strongly felt that if it were carried, the Governor would have little choice but to remove the Ministers. As a result of this belief, both the NCNC and the UNIP went all out; the one to keep its members from defecting, the other to try to capture a majority of members of the House so as to entrench a UNIP Government in Eastern Nigeria. The incidence of carpet crossing reached its peak now and the NCNC was seriously shaken, but when the question was finally put, the motion passed comfortably in favour of the NCNC. Yet the rebel Ministers sat tight and Governor Please refused to dismiss them. The crisis continued.

The Cameroon Bloc

One striking feature must go on record. The Cameroons thirteen members remained as solid with the NCNC as a rock. While men from the rest of the East crossed and criss-crossed the floor of the Assembly to the amusement of some and embarrassment of others, the Cameroons thirteen remained solid gaining the name of “The Cameroon Bloc.” Indeed if the character of Cameroonians in the eyes of Nigerians had ever been in doubt, the display of iron solidarity of the Cameroons thirteen during the Eastern Crisis stamped Cameroonians as men who know no retreat in war; men “whom

money or office could not buy.” For three long weeks all sorts of pressures and temptations were brandished before members of the Cameroon bloc, but none ever defected. At one time, rumour that the “bloc was showing cracks” turned out to be without foundation. It is against this setting that the NCNC motion of “vote of no confidence on the six ministers” was finally put, and when the count was taken the Yes 45, the Nos 32 was announced. The Cameroons thirteen had marched with the NCNC flawless to the end. After this vote, the issue became clear the NCNC could not lose its majority on the floor of the pastern House of Assembly; the UNIP could not muster a majority with which to run the Government. Even the stubborn Governor Pleass found himself facing an awkward stalemate. It was therefore not much of a surprise that shortly after this last test of power between the NCNC and the newly formed UNIP, the Eastern House of Assembly rose on a motion “that the House do adjourn sine die.”

The Crisis Shifts to Lagos

As has been explained already, thirty-four of the eighty members in the Eastern House were also members of the House of Representatives in Lagos. Shortly after the crisis-ridden Eastern House had risen, the House of Representatives was convened. Battered by three weeks of political war, the Eastern members arrived Lagos divided and torn apart. Of the four members from Enugu in the Federal Cabinet, only Dr. Endeley from the Cameroons remained NCNC The other three, A.C. Nwapa, Dr. Eni Njoku, and Okoi Arikpo had declared for the U.N .I.P. On the floor itself the other thirty members who had previously been solidly NCNC were now split between NCNC and UNIP This divided camp from the East, not only continued the war of words within itself, but faced an almost combined onslaught from the Action Group of the West and the NPC (Northern People’s Congress) of the north. These old adversaries of the NCNC could not conceal their glee at seeing their archenemy heavily split right at its base. Its depleted ranks found the combined NPC/Action Group /UNIP attack staggering. Particularly concentrated was their attack on the “Cameroon bloc” which was largely regarded as a vital flank that had saved the NCNC from being routed in the Eastern House. The mathematics was clear. The final count in Enugu had been NCNC 45, UNJ.P. 32. Now, if one removed

the thirteen Cameroonians from the NCNC to the UNIP the result would have been 32 NCNC 45 UNJP, and the NCNC would have been defeated. Such result would have set back African hopes for independence to an indefinite span of time, for Zik and the NCNC were the spearhead in the battle for Nigerian independence.

The Bloc Splits - Endeley Announces Policy of “Benevolent Neutrality”

When political scientists talk of minorities controlling majorities through holding the balance of power, the Cameroon case is a classic example. Thirteen men could have influenced the history of Nigeria if only they knew how to keep together and effectively manipulate their new-found balance of power. But this was not to be, as subsequent events showed. The concentration of attack on the “Cameroon Bloc” was intensified in Lagos. Shots were coming from all sides but the most telling appear to have been fired from the Governor who from indications had frowned at the role played by the Cameroon bloc to keep the NCNC from defeat in Enugu. Dr. Endeley, the Cameroonian member in the Central Government and the only surviving NCNC man there, began to feel “uncomfortable.”

The Federal House was on, and I was listening to speeches from members one afternoon when my friend late Honourable J.T. Ndze tapped me on the back for a chat in the corridors. I followed him when he told me that all the Cameroons members were assembled in Dr. Endeley’s office and he had come to invite me to the meeting. As we climbed the stairs to Dr. Endeley’s office, my friend released a hint of the reason for the meeting. Assembled in Dr. Endeley’s office which I was visiting for the first time, were Dr. Endeley in his chair, S.A. George, J.C. Kangsen, V.T. Lainjo, J.T. Ndze and myself on entering made the sixth. It was S.A. George who spoke first, in something like this “Mr. Mbile, we the Cameroons members have assembled here to review our position with the NCNC.” He went on to remind us that we were a Trust Territory and our position was different from that of Nigerians; our continued association with the NCNC was no longer in our interest. Dr. Endeley was experiencing difficulties with the Governor in the Executive Council and it was time we reconsidered our position with the NCNC. As George spoke, I noticed a general concurrence with what he was saying and I knew that I was merely coming in at the end of a firm conspiracy. My mind

wondered and I thought of the gravity of what was coming. All the reputation we had built around the Cameroon name would be gone. Nigerians would now regard us more treacherous than those who crossed carpet at Enugu in ones; we were to cross in a bloc of six or thirteen? My mind working like a clock wondered on countless thoughts. What great battles lay ahead! Would I survive?

In the maze that virtually enveloped me as I saw my one time brave comrades now no more than a bunch of cowards, there was one thought on which I was clear. I would never join this group to betray the NCNC even if I was left alone. When George paused I quickly butted in with what I considered a good point at least to win time. "Gentlemen, whatever we here wish to decide, would it not be better we met with our other seven colleagues who have gone home? Since they are seven and we are only six here, I would suggest that we go home, get all together, get even some of our elders to a meeting and put to them our idea, so that we could get all their support." I noticed as I advanced my points that some of my hearers were nodding agreement but not George and Endeley. A hot debate ensued between these two and me while Ndze, Kangsen and Lainjo seemed to have taken in some of my argument. There was no doubt that the two leaders feared the progress my view was making on the other three, so George immediately charged; "Mbile is trying to introduce delay tactics, so that our plans should be thwarted." The others took in this point. In reply to my view that six of us being less than the seven at home could not properly decide on such a major matter like withdrawal of the Cameroons from the NCNC, there clearly was no effective answer beyond the view that "they will understand us" . There was constant reference to the anger of the Governor with Dr. Endeley. All the while, I was watching carefully for a single voice that I could count on, but there was none. Even my friend Ndze, who had volunteered to come out and call me, was only trying to persuade me to agree with their plan.

When I found my one-time stalwarts of the "Cameroon bloc" adamant and bent on their design to strike this foul blow at the NCNC, I felt dazed and saw stars. All the pride and the good name we had built at Enugu, all Cameroonians in Nigeria whose status and integrity had been so boosted by our performance at Enugu, all our Nigerian friends before whom we had become giants in character and reliance, all these would disappear in a short while like a desert mirage?

Where would I hide my head? I picked up my papers and standing up erect, addressed my other five men “Gentlemen I see we have reached the parting of the ways. I cannot be a party to your plan that we break away from the NCNC in the middle of a battle in which we had been so much in the fore front.” I left the room, staggered down the steps and returned to my seat in the House. Few of the fellow members who were listening to speeches that afternoon realised the political bomb-shell that Dr. Endeley was going to release to the House of Representatives, in what became known as “Dr. Endeley’s policy of Cameroons benevolent neutrality.”

It did not take much more than an hour from my walk out on them for Dr. Endeley and his four followers to return to their seats. Catching the President’s eye, Dr. Endeley rose to read out a statement which he headed “Cameroons Benevolent Neutrality.” In it, he declared that he was speaking for himself and for the majority of Cameroonians and their representatives that the Cameroons had broken their ties with the NCNC. That henceforth, Cameroonians were going to maintain a policy of benevolent neutrality in Nigeria’s politics. He was loudly applauded by the members of the House of Representatives, the overwhelming majority of whom were adversaries of the NCNC. As a matter of fact, in a House of 68 (NPC) from the North, 34 (Action Group) from the West and 34 (NCNC and VNIP) from the East, there were now barely some 26 NCNC members left, following this latest set back from the Cameroon bloc.

Despite the overwhelming odds against me however, I caught the eye of the President of the House and rose in my seat to dissociate myself from the declaration of Dr. Endeley. I contended that five out of the thirteen elected Cameroonians surely had no mandate to break the links existing for many years between the Cameroons and the NCNC. Even the entire thirteen elected members did not possess, nor could they exercise the power to break the Cameroons from the NCNC. The heavy heckling from the anti NCNC elements that overwhelmed the House virtually drowned my speech. The cheers I received from the handful of the surviving NCNC members compared very poorly with the loud applause that had earlier greeted Dr. Endeley’s declaration. The enemies of the NCNC rejoiced at the signs of the fall of their foe. Yet note was taken of my voice of dissent and observers saw at once that even if it was said that the Cameroons had betrayed the NCNC it had not done so hook line and sinker.

It did not take long for news of the split of the “bloc” to hit our home shores, and the reactions from there to bounce back. The lines were now drawn; for Dr. Endeley, nine: S.T. Muna, J.N. Foncha, S.A. George, Martin Forju, V.T. Lainjo, J.C. Kangsen, J.T. Ndze, A.T. Ngala. For Mbile four: P.N. Motomby-Woleta, R.N. Charley and Sama Ndi. I must confess that after the shock I had received in Lagos, to find three strong men on my side was a happy surprise. I was particularly happy at the stand of Motomby-Woleta for two reasons. He was such a personal friend of mine that had I lost his support, my loss would not have been limited to politics; it would have extended to my personal life. The second reason was that, Motomby-Woleta was one of the best parliamentarians of the Cameroon thirteen. A skilled debater and a flawless master of the English language, he was a tremendous asset to my side in the political divide which had descended on the Cameroon bloc and the war which was to rage between us for six tedious years. All told, my faction was well placed on the coastal belt: Victoria was fairly split between us, Kumba was intact for me as my old comrade Chief R.N. Charley of Bakossi stood by my side to the end. George and Forju took Mamfe to the other side but as events were soon to show, hope was not completely lost. Bamenda central went full to the other side as Muna, Foncha and Lainjo queued firmly behind Endeley; but in Wum Prince Sarna Ndi, son of the Fon of Korn, stood his ground to the bitter end by my side. Nkambe with Ndze and Ngala went to the other side. So the battle lines were drawn and the once solid “Cameroon bloc” was heavily split beyond repair.

Immediately the House of Representatives rose after the Budget Session in March 1953, Dr. Endeley and his men flew home to the Cameroons and conducted a lightning tour of the territory from Victoria to Bamenda. In this tour, my faction was heavily vilified and branded as traitors who had “sold the Cameroons to Ibos,” The declaration of my three colleagues, Motomby, Charley and Sarna Ndi for my side had reached my opponents before I knew; before I even left Lagos for home. So, they were already the target of attack at home even before I, their chief priest arrived. What had delayed my return home was a car I was negotiating to buy from Joe Allens, Lagos. I finally bought a used car, a Zephyr Six for three hundred pounds which I had borrowed from the African Continental Bank, engaged a driver and left for the Cameroons. The din of the campaign of the

other side that I had “sold the Cameroons to Ibos” was intensified when I arrived with my car. “There” they pointed, “is the booty. That’s the car the Ibos have bought for him, the man who has sold the Cameroons.” It was like facing a storm with little cover. The effect of the first attack by the Endeley group left us stunned, but soon after the first surprise, I met Charley, Motomby and Sama Ndi, who had impatiently been awaiting my return. I told them of my Lagos experience and they gave me their support. Honourable Motomby-Woleta exclaimed “the Cameroons cannot be hydra headed. We cannot bear one head at Enugu and a new one in Lagos.”

One of my happy surprises on return home was the discovery that many Cameroonians, especially some intellectual youths were on my side of the controversy. At Victoria, a batch of them headed by P.I. Eno, Chemist and Druggist, were already working out plans to counter the Endeley propaganda campaign. At Kumba, Z.N. Efamba, E.E. Sona and others were equally working out plans. It did not take long and those who held my point of view launched the Kamerun People’s Party (KPP) to face the Kamerun National Congress (KNC) of Dr. Endeley which had been launched by him and the others like Mr. R.J.K. Dibonge. This took place at Kumba soon after Endeley’s declaration of benevolent neutrality in the House of Representatives, Lagos in April 1953.

To hear my side of the case, a conference of my tribe was convened at Boa Bakundu sometime in April 1953, which was heavily attended. In this tribal caucus, I went into the minutest detail to explain what had happened at Enugu and in Lagos. Even my innocent tribal crowd could not accept the lie that my own car needed “sale of Cameroons” whereas five other Cameroons Assemblymen (Endeley, Muna, Kangsen, Motomby, Ngala) had already bought cars before me. “Disua” an ancient sacred rite was brought out over which I took our traditional oath of my innocence of the allegation of “selling Cameroons to Nigeria.” I emerged from the Boa conference greatly strengthened in my stand and resolve. My people after hearing my side of the controversy and after my solemn tribal oath, resolved to stand by me, and mandated me to go out without fear to the length and breadth of the Cameroons and speak out my point of view. They agreed with me that it was unmanly, treacherous and contrary to the Oroko character to have backed out of the fight in the midst of a war which we had all declared. They called on the spirit of our fathers to

guide me in the right.

Shortly, notice came out that the Eastern House of Assembly was summoned for May 5th 1953, and divided as we now were, the Cameroon thirteen like other members, bent their steps towards Enugu. Although I had up till then given up the Bamenda group, there was one member I did not yet write off completely John Ngu Foncha. The reason was that he was President of the Bamenda Improvement Association which was the only political body of Bamenda youths to receive Zik when he visited the Cameroons in 1946 and I remembered my stand by him in court only months before. At Enugu, I contacted Honourable Foncha for his stand and he replied, "I am sorry to disappoint you. I am afraid of joining your side." So back at Enugu again, and in the morning of 5th May 1953, we all took our seats in the House of Assembly, Enugu.

The VNIP, obviously encouraged by the split in the Cameroon Bloc, came forward for a test of strength in the form of a motion. "That this Honourable House return Mr S.T. Muna as member of the Executive Council of the Eastern Region." You do not have to be a political scientist to understand the sinister purpose of this motion. Honourable Muna had been one of the three faithful NCNC Ministers. So far, the NCNC were right to still call him their man. If the motion were carried, the NCNC would have bowed to a VNIP Government in Eastern Nigeria. On the other hand, the NCNC was now torn between their sympathy for Muna and the Cameroons members, and their battle with the UNIP. Of course the NCNC was not unaware of where Muna now stood. Dr. K.O. Mbadiwe rose to speak for the NCNC. He was sorry that the UNIP was using the name of a one-time darling of the NCNC to test their strength in the House. This showed once again the bad faith and sinister intention of the UNIP against the NCNC, the party that had the mission to win independence for Nigeria and the Cameroons. Dr. Mbadiwe then thundered, "we who represent this great party in the Eastern House of Assembly have the solemn duty to save it for this country and our posterity no matter the price we pay. I call on all members of the NCNC to oppose the motion." A debate ensued which lasted a good part of the day. When finally the question was put, and the count taken, the result was "Yes" 32, "No" 45. The "Nos" had it. The House adjourned for the day, the members little realising what awaited them, in less than twenty-four hours.



Eastern House of Assembly Dissolved

On the morning of 6th May 1953 the members of the Assembly took their seats as usual. Prayers and the other formalities were observed as Governor Clement Pleass looking stern and grim took the chair as President of the House. A measure of uncertainty in the course of events, clearly hung in the air. We had passed a vote of “No confidence” on the “sit-tight ministers”, they were not removed; now we had just voted down this last effort of the UNIP to establish themselves; what next? No one seemed to have a clear picture of what was coming. Was the obstinate and stubborn Governor not going to kick out these men at last, or was there going to be something else? It is in the midst of all these questions, and more besides, that we all sat there staring at the Governor as the moments ticked away.

At last, the President rose in his seat. In his hand he held a document which he immediately proceeded to read, “By virtue of powers conferred on me by ... I hereby declare the Eastern House of Assembly dissolved. A date for new elections will be announced later.” For a few moments, we all sat stunned with the initial shock of the pronouncement. Then the NCNC boys began to clap and cheer. The clapping and cheering went on for a while, then died down as members adjusted themselves to the harsh fact that our five-year term of office for which many had staked fortunes had dramatically ended. There were those who had won their seats by the narrowest of margins. Others knew what formidable obstacles awaited them in their

constituencies, while the bulk of members remembered too well what battering they would have in another try for a seat into the Eastern House of Assembly. Back home in the Cameroons and Bamenda provinces, we the Cameroons members had our special problem. We were now in two violent camps, and there could be no doubt that we were going to have a very bitter and hot campaign.

KNC versus KPP 1953 Elections

It did not take long for the new elections to the Eastern House of Assembly to be fixed for 26th October 1953. Before we left for home, we the KPP members travelled to Eket where Mr. P.M. Kale was working for the Salvation Army, as Supervisor of Schools. We brought him up to date on the course of events leading to the dissolution of the Eastern House of Assembly, and gave him the decision of the home front that he be offered the place of Leader of the KPP. This was in recognition of his age and contribution to the growth of politics and political awakening in the Cameroons, and Mr. Kale humbly bowed to the will of the people. It was however agreed that he remain in Eket to wind up his affairs with his employers, while we returned home to lock horns with the KNC. At the appropriate time, he was to join us at home to give battle to our political adversaries.

Soon, the KNC and KPP were indeed locked in a grim combat for the thirteen seats for the Cameroons and Bamenda provinces. Both parties held campaign meetings all over the territory, though the KPP faced almost an impossible task. Starting off as the under dog, with four against nine of the old members, we had a terrible job to explain to an illiterate electorate our support for the NCNC which our opponents had called “an Ibo party.” The Ibos, a hardworking and enterprising tribe from the Eastern Region of Nigeria had come to the Cameroons as petty traders and gun makers in the late twenties and early thirties. By their industry, their often-unscrupulous business methods, and their brash manners, they had attracted a great deal of feeling against them from the indigenous Cameroon population. The NCNC party led by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, an Ibo, was therefore referred to by its opponents as an Ibo organisation, using this propaganda to vilify all those who joined the NCNC whether Ibo or not. Cameroonians unused to the vile things that can be said about opponents in politics, particularly at an election campaign, believed

most of the propaganda against the KPP candidates. As a result, the first election fought on party basis in Southern Cameroons turned out to be a classic example of misuse and misunderstanding of the sacred franchise.

KPP candidates were attacked personally everywhere by Cameroonian tribesmen who genuinely believed that we were traitors to the Cameroons. My own car was stoned in an ambush at Kumba and most of our candidates faced personal attacks physically. Some of the British officials in the Cameroons, alarmed by the threat of black independence for which the NCNC stood, threw their lot against the KPP men; but for the respect for principles in which the British as a people then excelled, we the KPP would hardly have been allowed to operate. Yet, it must be said to the credit of the Cameroonian character that despite all the bitterness and threats even to their personal lives, there were Cameroonians who were ready to stand up and be counted amongst the KPP. In the Bamenda division, we had an impossible situation. All the three members from the Eastern House of Assembly: Muna, Foncha and Lainjo were KNC; so even a bridgehead from which we could develop an attack was not there. Our intelligence was that spears awaited us if we dared preach KPP in the heartland of that KNC northern stronghold. Yet we dared, and gave a number of talks at Abakpa, in the cosmopolitan city of Mankon. It was, however, too early for the folk there to understand the sinister purpose of the KNC against the more humanitarian pan-Africanist stand of the Kamerun Peoples Party. Even up the hills of Kom, Prince Sarna Ndi, our lone candidate up those heights, could hardly get a hearing. The real battle, however, was in the forest plains of Mamfe, Kumba and Victoria where these urban areas provided the only forum from where the KPP could be given any hearing at all. Off these parts, in the rural homelands of Bamenda, it was virtually a one way traffic. The tribal folk only listened to the voices of their own leaders. The other side was rejected even before being heard as the fight was virtually on tribal lines. At Nso, the Fon had told Mr. Z.N. Efamba, a spokesman of the KPP, "my people are already confused through listening to too much politics. I refuse you permission to address the Nso population on your KPP story." The Bakweris were evenly split more or less; the Balondos, now Oroko, except the Mbonges, were in the main with me;

the Bakossi were split with Chief Charley hardly taking his share. In Mamfe, George kept the bulk of the Ejaghams and Bayang, while Forju kept the Bangwa intact almost to the man. The propaganda of “selling Cameroon to Ibos” swept across Cameroons and Bamenda provinces like wild fire, and like fire, it ate up both right and wrong.

Constitutional Advance: London Conference 1953

Before the elections to the Eastern House precipitated by the 1953 Eastern crisis fully got under way, another event of great moment swept over the entire Federation. Her Majesty’s Government of Great Britain convened a constitutional conference to sit in London in July and August of that year. The Eastern crisis had shown out a number of weaknesses in the Macpherson Constitution and the British as well as local political authorities agreed on the need to draw up a new constitution; one that would take care of the weaknesses in the Macpherson constitution and among other things face the burning agitation for Self-Government leading to Independence. Invitations were therefore extended to the leading political parties or groups in Nigeria.

The point must be made here that as a political entity, Nigeria meant the Colony of Lagos, the Protectorate of Nigeria, and the Trust Territory of the Cameroons. The parties invited to the conference included the majority and opposition groups in each Region. Six delegates were drawn from each Region and one delegate from the Trust Territory of the Cameroons. Of the six delegates from the Western and Northern Regions, five were nominated by the majority parties there of the Action Group and the Northern Peoples Congress and one each was nominated by the principal minority parties in those Regions, while in the Eastern Region, four delegates were nominated by the NCNC majority and two by the principal minority, the UNIP

In respect of the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under the Eastern Region, we were as follows:

- 1) Dr. E.M.L. Endeley Delegate
- 2) Mr. S.A. George Adviser
- 3) Rev. J.C. Kangsen Adviser
- 4) Mr. N. N. Mbile Adviser (NCNC)

During the separate discussion in the Colonial Office between British officials and the Cameroons team, Dr. Endeley challenged my right to participate in the meeting on the ground that I was representing the NCNC and therefore not competent to attend the separate discussion on Cameroon affairs. This was overruled by the Chair (Sir Oliver Littleton, Colonial Secretary) for the reason that it was a legitimate right not only of the majority but of all shades of political opinion to present views in the writing of a constitution. The Chair held that I was properly there on the platform of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons, even if that party was a minority opinion in the Territory. After presenting our respective points of view, the Colonial Secretary came out with the statement that if Dr. Endeley's group won majority in the impending elections of October 26, 1953, consideration would be given by Her Majesty's Government to create a separate administration from the Eastern Region of Nigeria, of that part of the Trust Territory then administered under Enugu. I hold to this day that the British in that statement provided the leverage that assisted our opponents to win, since the demand for Regional Status for the Trust Territory was on the ticket of every political shade of opinion amongst Cameroonians and was in the memorandum presented by me at the London talks. We had disagreed only because in the midst of the Eastern crisis, the Endeley group had chosen to back out, on the pretext of Cameroons neutrality in Nigerian politics, and in our divided camps, one popular tactic of our adversaries was to paint us as those who wanted nothing good for the Cameroons, including the quest for Regional status for the territory.

The demand for a Region for the Cameroons was so popular that anyone accused of not wishing it earned great unpopularity before most Cameroonians. In later years when Cameroonians had grown to be less gullible, they learnt too late, perhaps, that none after all was any less patriotic towards the fatherland. Elections were something new in our midst and the bulk of our people were too green and naive to understand the tricks and sugar-coated stories at election campaigns intended to destroy political opponents and win power. They swallowed most propaganda and cried down the other side which believed in their point of view, no less fiercely. If man lived forever, we could start the game all over again and learn to laugh off those excesses at election campaigns. But life is short and men like Kale, Motomby-Woleta, Ndze, George and Kemcha cannot join us in

another exchange of accusations and counter accusations at election campaigns.

The tactics of the British did not surprise us. They had not been happy with the support which the Cameroon bloc gave the NCNC at Enugu and Endeley's drift away from the NCNC surely suited them. It was the British who had decided to administer the Cameroons from 1916 as an integral part of Nigeria. Yet, when this arrangement resulted in Nigerian politics as well as other ideas spreading into the Cameroons, the same British now began back-peddalling with divide-and-rule tactics. I was born knowing myself as a native of my village, my clan Ngolo-Batanga, my Division as Kumba, my province as Cameroons, and my country as Nigeria. This is what the British wrote down and handed out to the schools to be taught and when the age of politics began, Cameroonians in Lagos joined in the formation of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC). Later, when some of us left school and got inclined to "national affairs" or "politics," our breeding ground had been the Cameroons Youth League which incidentally had been founded by Cameroonians in Lagos, and the C.Y.L. was an affiliate and foundation member of the NCNC. The first president of the CYL was Mr. P.M. Kale, while the first Secretary was Dr. E.M.L. Endeley. So, if younger Cameroonians like ourselves did follow a course initiated by our older countrymen, and if through the British system imposed on us before we were born, we had imbibed certain ideas and tendencies through our contact with Nigeria, it sounded like playing a double game for the British to now frown at the result of their own arrangement.

The British Government had administered the Cameroons as a province of Nigeria from the exit of Kaiser William's Germany and most of us had been born deep within the years when the Cameroons was administered as an integral part of Nigeria, and Cameroons children grew side by side Nigerian children with no distinction whatsoever. We had thus imbibed the same ideas with Nigerian children and had formed one political party the NCNC with Nigerians. Those who had been born in later years and had learnt to know themselves only as Cameroonians were behaving consistent with their time, no less than those whose behaviour had been influenced by the issues of the earlier days. Those who thought that they could have behaved differently in similar circumstances were free to hold their view.

This argument received considerable examination at the United Nations in 1959 during the debate at the Trusteeship Council, on the Resolution for adoption of the two Plebiscite Questions. The two points of view had come out clearly. One view was that, since Cameroon had been one country as a German colony, therefore, the divided former German colony “must” be reunified as one country. The other point of view had held that, the former German colony was created by European powers from the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, their interests being the sole consideration. When the same Europeans disagreed to the extent of war, and in 1919 ended with a different arrangement after the war, British Cameroonians were now free to decide for the first time by themselves, the course they wished to take for their future, based purely on the benefits from their choice. Since both arrangements had been European creations solely in their interest, none was sacrosanct.

1. In brief the London Conference of 1953, amongst other recommendations, agreed that Nigeria should be a Federation and the Federal Government vested with certain powers including residual powers, while the Regional Governments controlled those powers within their competence.

2. In regard to elections, they were henceforth going to be separate and distinct between those to the Regional Houses and those to the House of Representatives.

3. Voting was now going to be based on tax payers as against the old system of Divisional Electoral Meetings comprising representatives from districts.

4. In regard to Regional Governments, it was agreed that from the party that controlled a majority of the members of the House, the Regional Executive with an African majority shall be drawn.

5. There were several other details of recommendations of this conference, which do not appear of interest to this record.

On our return from the London conference, the Eastern Region members threw themselves without reserve into the campaigns for the elections of 26th October 1953. The elections were particularly bitter in the Cameroons. The KPP which had shortly been born and which controlled only four of the original thirteen Cameroon members was intensely vilified. All the tribal feelings against the Ibos were heaped on

the KPP party and its candidates and members. In Bamenda in particular, the KPP could hardly raise a candidate on its ticket, and we were told by close friends not to come as only spears awaited us in certain places. Our lone candidate, Prince Sarna Ndi was virtually isolated up in the hills of Kom fighting a losing battle. The conflict was severest in the forest plains where the KPP put up such a fight that “even the enemies we defied were constrained to honour us.” The odds were great and the last blow in the statement from the Colonial Secretary on “Regional Status” for Cameroons came like a huge wave sweeping across a half drowning swimmer. Yet we held it out and fought to the end. The battle of the brave men of the KPP reminds us of Leonidas the Greek and his three hundred braves, dying to the last, but not forsaking their noble cause.

KNC Wins 1953 Elections

When the count was taken on October 26th the KNC won virtually all the thirteen seats. In the coastal plantation plains of Victoria, gallant Motomby- Woleta and Uncle P.M. Kale lost to Dr. Endeley and Mr. E.K. Martin. In the midlands of Kumba, N.N. Mbile and Chief R.N. Charley lost to F.N. Ajebe Sone and J.M. Bokwe. The margin was a mere six votes. In Mamfe S. A. George won, while Martin Forju lost to S.E. Ncha an independent candidate. Bamenda Division was won by S.T. Muna, J.N. Foncha and V. T. Lainjo all for KNC In Wum our stately Prince Sarna Ndi held out against all the odds of war, and lost gallantly like a prince indeed, fighting to the end; his head bloody but unbowed. The formidable trio of Muna, Foncha and Lainjo had made Bamenda Division impregnable. We had to be content with storming the city of Mankon one sunny afternoon with a hot lecture in the Abakpa market, in which we bearded the three lions of Bamenda in part of their den, but the lions were quietly combing their Meta I Moghamo I Ngie-Ngwo strongholds, the plains of Ndop, and the heights of Nso, keeping their folk there intact, and laughing at those daring lads from the south. Our march on Mankon where we shouted ourselves hoarse to the cheering of some five hundred youths who had come to hear the KPP for the only time, did not as much as rustle the air against the Muna/Lainjo/Foncha trio. In Wum Reverend J. C. Kangsen and I. N. Nkwain took the two seats and Prince Sarna

conceded defeat. In Nkambe, J.T. Ndze and J. Nsame won for KNC

So, that was the lot: KNC 12; independent 1; KPP 0. These Cameroons results were a great set back to the forces of the KPP In the rest of Eastern Nigeria the NCNC crushed the VNIP virtually out of existence. Dr. Azikiwe who ran for a seat to the Eastern House of Assembly, Enugu from his constituency at Onitsha, became leader of Government and Minister of Local Government, Eastern Region. Eyo Ita and all his six sit-tight Ministers, in fact all the UNIP men, lost their seats.

1953 Election Results (Southern Cameroons)

Victoria

Dr. E.M.L Endeley

Mr. E.K. Martin

Chief Manga Williams (N.A. Member)

Kumba

Mr. F.N. Ajebe-Sone

Mr. J.M. Bokwe

Mr. H.N. Mulango (N.A. Member)

Mamfe

Mr. S.A. George

Mr. S.E. Ncha

Mr. S.A. Foto (N.A. Member)

Bamenda

Mr. J.N. Foncha

Mr. S.T. Muna

Mr. V.T. Lainjo

Mr. Monju (N.A. Member)

Wum

Rev. J.C. Kangsen

Mr. J.N. Nkwain

Mr. A. N. Jua (N.A. Member)

Nkambe

Mr. J.T. Ndze

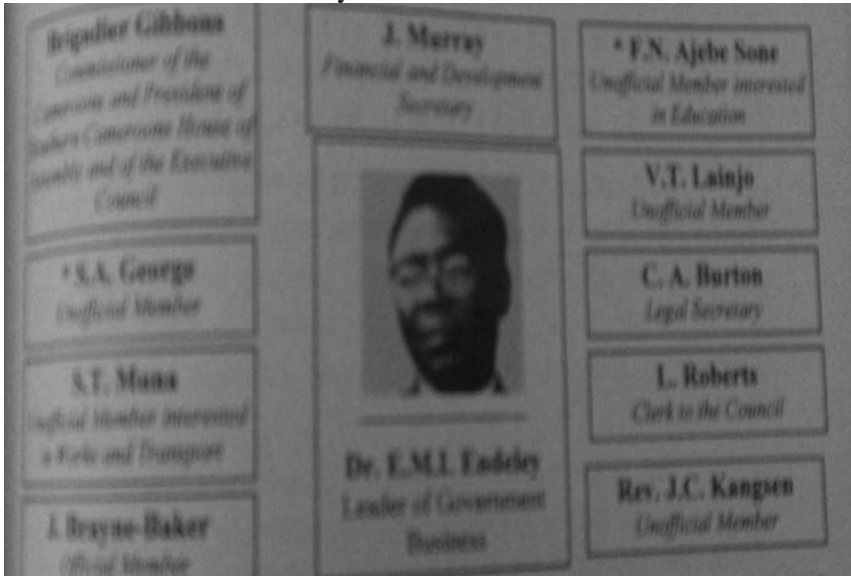
Mr. J. Nsame
Chief Nformi (N.A. Member)

The NCNC victory in the Eastern Region sounded incomplete due to the defeat of the KPP candidates in the Cameroons. On the other hand the KNC victors in the Cameroons were in no small dilemma over what to do with their seats won in the elections to the Assembly at Enugu. When the House was convened, Dr. Endeley and his men found no pleasure in facing an NCNC controlled House. There lurked the problem of Ncha, the independent member who could easily have been sent to Lagos as Federal Minister had he decided to take his seat with the NCNC majority in the Eastern House of Assembly. On their part the 12 KNC members now decided to boycott the Eastern House of Assembly in view of the face they had lost with NCNC and the Eastern Region as a whole. Ncha who was too naive and inexperienced to strike out what a more astute politician would have flung as a historic blow, lost his chance through inaction and hanging along Dr. Endeley's group. It was only after the chance had been long lost and the small House of Assembly had been established in Buea in 1954 that Ncha declared for the KPP.

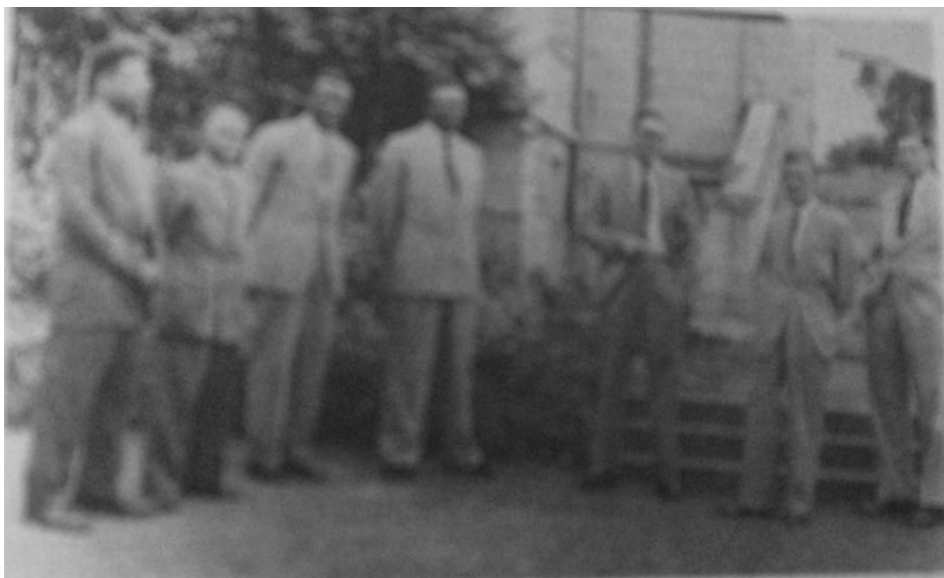
KNC Action Group Conclude Alliance (1954)

This phase of the story cannot be complete without the record that early in 1954 Dr. Endeley's KNC concluded an alliance with Chief Awolowo's Action Group of Nigeria and Chief Obafemi Awolowo visited the Cameroons as guest of Dr. Endeley's KNC. This about turn of Dr. Endeley on his policy of "Cameroons benevolent neutrality" from Nigerian politics struck him and his KNC a blow whose adverse effect lingered long. It also scored a moral victory for us in our voice of dissent against a policy that so quickly failed to stand the test of time. For Foncha and Jua, it provided their strongest reason and justification for the break with the KNC, leading to their founding of KNDP in 1955. It is hardly necessary to repeat, how the KPP brandished this out to all the land, as a fitting measuring rod for the reliance Dr. Endeley's word deserved.

Dr. Endeley's Government - 1954



NB: Unofficial Members referred to the Africans who had been elected to the House of Assembly and got appointed as members of the cabinet from the majority party in the House. They were rested in certain subjects. Official members were the civil servants who were members of the cabinet by virtue of their office (mostly expatriates). They also sat in the House of Assembly and had to explain Government policies.



Endeley Government of 1954 (left to right) Ajebe Sone (who replaced S.A. George), Rev. Kangsen, S.T. Muna, Dr. Endeley, Brigadier Gibbons, Brayne Baker, C. A. Burton.

Chapter Six

Lagos Reassembled Constitutional Conference: January - February 1954 Southern Cameroons Gains Quasi-Federal Status

Dr. Endeley and his KNC men returned to Buea where they were neither here nor there constitutionally until the reassembled conference in Lagos, January and February 1954 endorsed a Quasi-Federal status for Southern Cameroons. Below is the declarations on the issue following the Lagos talks.

“The future administration of Southern Cameroons was discussed by the Secretary of State with the Cameroons delegation in the light of the general election and of the conclusion reached by the Fiscal Commission that a Southern Cameroons Regional Government would not in the years immediately ahead be financially stable without external financial assistance. The Secretary of State subsequently informed the conference on the outcome of these discussions in a statement outlining the proposals for the future structure of Government in the Territory. The text of the statement which dealt also with the future of Northern Cameroons, is attached as annex III to this report. The Conference endorsed the proposals in this statement.

During the discussion of these proposals, it was agreed that the Eastern Region should neither lose nor gain (except for minimal amount) as a result of the proposal to make the Southern Cameroons a quasi-Federal Territory. The share of the net proceed of import duties (other than tobacco and motor spirit) to be allotted to the Southern Cameroons should be one percent and the share of the Eastern Region should be reduced from 30 percent to 29 percent. The cost of the Commissioner of the Cameroons and Lagos Conference (Jan.-Feb. 1954), S. Cameroon Gains Quasi-Federal Status his Headquarters would be borne on the Southern Cameroons budget and the Southern Cameroons would raise a loan of some 300.000 pounds for initial capital with the Federal Government at a rate of interest to be negotiated.

The conference agreed that members of the proposed Executive Council of the Southern Cameroons would not be called ministers, but it was agreed that the Commissioner of the Cameroons should assign to individual members of the Executive Council, subjects or groups of subjects within the territorial field in which those members would be expected to take a special interest both in the Executive Council and in the Assembly.

To avoid a further general elections in the territory later this year after the

proposed new Legislative Assembly had been constituted, the conference agreed that the thirteen members from the Southern Cameroons who had recently been elected to the Eastern Regional House of Assembly should be the first elected members of the Southern Cameroons Assembly. The life of this first Assembly should end not later than 31st December, 1956."

ANNEX III

STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE, ON THE CAMEROONS UNDER UNITED KINGDOM TRUSTEESHIP

"I wish to inform the Conference of the course of my discussions with the Kamerun National Congress delegation.

1. At the beginning of our meeting, Abba Habib of the Northern Peoples Congress delegation was also present, and he informed me that the Northern Cameroons adhered to the view which he had expressed to me during the London Conference and still wished to remain part of the Northern Region. Lagos Conference (Jan- Feb. 1954), S. Cameroon Gains Quasi-Federal Status.

2. I then discussed the future of the Southern Cameroons with Dr. Endeley and his advisers in the light of the results of the recent general election and of the Fiscal Commissioner's Report. Her Majesty's Government will continue to assist the Trust Territory with Colonial Development and Welfare funds. These funds could not however be used to supplement ordinary revenue in order to meet a current deficit. For some years to come, there may be a need for external financial assistance, if the Southern Cameroons were to remain part of the Federation, though not part of the Eastern Region, this could only come from the Federal Government.

3. Dr. Endeley told me that the Southern Cameroons did not wish to leave the Federation. I therefore explained to him that if the Federal Government were to be asked to accept a contingent liability to assist the Southern Cameroons in the event of deficits, the other delegations to the conference were certain to require the fullest guarantees that Government in the territory would be conducted on the soundest financial and economic principles. This, the Kamerun National Congress delegation accepted.

4. We then discussed a possible structure of government in the territory and reached agreement on the following proposals. The Southern Cameroons would cease to be part of the Eastern Region, but would remain part of the Federation of Nigeria and be quasi-Federal Territory.

5. The Federal Legislature and the Federal Executive would have jurisdiction in the territory with respect to matters in the Federal and concurrent lists.

6. *The territory would have a legislature of its own. This territorial Legislature would consist of the Governor General, who would be the authority to assent to bills on.*

Her Majesty's behalf, and an assembly made up as follows:

- I. The Commissioner of the Cameroons (President)*
- II. ii. Thirteen elected members*
- III. Six representatives of Native Authorities*
- iv. Two representatives of Special interests or communities not otherwise adequately represented, and*
- v. three ex-officio members*

The three officio members would be:

- An officer with duties corresponding to those now performed by the Civil Secretary of a Region (who would have the title of Deputy Commissioner).*
- An officer concerned with development and financial matters;*
- A Legal officer.*

7. The territorial legislature would have powers to make laws for the territory on matters on the concurrent list and on residual matters (i.e matters on neither lists). It would have power to raise revenue from those sources open to a Regional Legislature. It would consider an annual Budget and would pass an appropriation bill based on that Budget. This bill would, like any other, come to the Governor General for assent.

8. There would be an Executive Council which will consist of the Commissioner, the three ex-officio members of the Legislature, and four members nominated by the Governor General after consultation with the Commissioner. These four members would be selected from amongst the twenty-one unofficial Members of the Assembly, and the Commissioner before submitting recommendations to the Governor General, would consult the leader of the majority party in the Assembly. Lagos Conference (Jan. - Feb. 1954), S. Cameroon Gains Quasi- Federal Status. The Commissioner would be obliged to consult the Executive Council, except in certain specified circumstances, but he would be authorised to act against the Council's advice if he deemed it right to do so.

9. As we agreed at the London Conference, the Southern Cameroons would be represented in the Federal Legislature by six members. There would as at present be one Minister from the Southern Cameroons, in the Council of Ministers.

10. The Southern Cameroons could not be treated like a Region for the purpose of revenue allocation. The Government of Nigeria has for some years past, made available for expenditure in or on behalf of the Trust Territory all Government revenue derived from the Trust Territory. It has done this through Central and Regional Estimates and through the Commonwealth Development Fund. An assurance has been given to the Trusteeship Council that, all revenues derived from the Trust Territory, will continue to be devoted to the Trust Territory and arrangements must be made to this end.

11. I hope the conference would agree that the suggestions I have made provide reasonable safeguards for the Federation's interests, while meeting the legitimate aspirations of the Southern Cameroons. Accordingly, I invite the conference to endorse these proposals"

Federal Elections 1954

The heat of the 1953 elections had hardly subsided when following the Lagos Conference of January 1954, elections to the House of Representatives, Lagos were announced and we were out on the campaign trail again. Six seats, one for each Division of Southern Cameroons were fought out between the KNC and the KPP. The system of picking the candidate from the divisional electoral meetings continued as had happened in the earlier contest and again, the KNC won the entire six. The Kumba seat counted sure for KPP, was won by the KNC, but the results were extremely controversial, and clearly, the fourteen KNC electors declared winners at the Kombone primaries remain to my mind responsible for turning the scales of the final outcome of the Kumba seat.

Kombone primary area was a traditional stronghold of the KPP; so for KNC to win there, that party arranged for thousands of its men from outside the polling area to pour into Kombone, many of them carrying all sorts of implements for fighting. The wild, unruly throng of these virtual invaders from places as far away as Kumba Town, Tombel etc. made it most difficult for the police and polling officers to ensure a fair election. This confusion that had caused postponement of the Kombone primaries once, showed little improvement at this second attempt to hold the elections. Yet, we were determined to go on despite all the hustling and bustling, and at the end of a long hot day, pretty close to sun down, the count was taken. It was found that

the number of votes cast far exceeded the total number in the register. Instead of eighteen hundred registered voters the total votes cast was nearly three thousand. On examining the cause of this, it was discovered that certain names and numbers had been used to cast more than one vote. Some names had been used to vote as many as five times.

Mr. J.J. Balrnain, S.D.O. Kumba Division and presiding officer, then consulted his polling officers and they came to the conclusion to cancel off any name against which there was evidence of more than a single vote cast. By this decision, hundreds of votes were disqualified, and when the balance was counted, the KNC fourteen men won.

I believe to this day that KPP was robbed of victory because none of my innocent voters at Kombone knew anything about voting more than once, and since this was one of our strongholds where our numbers vastly exceeded those of our opponents, we did not need any such means to ensure victory. I believe that most of the votes cancelled belonged to the KPP though the fourteen KNC electors at Kombone ensured victory for their candidate Hon. V.E. Mukete in the final elections to the House of Representatives in Lagos, beating N.N. Mbile, KPP candidate by a mere six votes.

Hon. Mukete (later Nfon Mukete) became Federal Minister in Lagos, and when Southern Cameroons finally left Nigeria was appointed Chairman CDC, a post he held with distinction for twenty-two years. He is now the First Class Chief of Kumba and Member of the CPDM Central Committee.

The other five of the last Cameroonians who sat in the Nigerian House of Representatives deserve mention.

- Hon. Fritz Ngale was member for Victoria and at the end of his term, became a businessman enjoying the distinction at one time of controlling a fleet of transport buses. He retired quietly from the House of Representatives and now lives at Small Soppo, Buea.

- Hon. P.A. Aiyuk, member for Mamfe, returned to the Civil Service where his talent as Auditor was still in great demand until he finally retired and became Chief of Ntenako in Manyu Division. Chief Peter Arrey Aiyuk at home in Manyu, is still active in local affairs, and he figured high amongst those who stood by Chief S.A. Arrey of Ossing, to launch the giant Ossing Water Scheme.

- Hon. L.S. Fonka came home to Bui at the end of his term in the

Nigerian House of Representatives until another call rolled by and he WHS elected member of the National Assembly, Yaounde. In 1988, Hon. Fonka's list of four candidates for Bui Division (CPDM) won election into the National Assembly Yaounde. His tide did not end there; it swept him up for selection as President of the National Assembly Yaounde, making him second to Hon. S. T. Muna to hold this prestigious post of President of the National Assembly, Yaounde. Hon. Muna had stepped down into political retirement, after 36 years of unbroken political office during which time, he had held the offices of Minister, Prime Minister, Vice President and President of the Cameroon National Assembly.

- Hon. L. N. Ning of Wum, returned to the teaching job he had left on being elected to the House of Representatives, Lagos, but fate destined otherwise. He died as quietly as he came in his constituency of Wum.

- Hon. Mbonyam, returned home to the peaceful hills of Nkambe where he lived a quiet life of retirement until his death.

KNDP Launched in 1955

Men may start a journey together, but they never always end it so. The KNC, mighty and sweeping in 1953 and 1954, began to show cracks by 1955. Surely, the hard blows from the KPP though twice vanquished and for several years out of Parliament were beginning to tell. The combined political blows at the KNC by Kale, Mbile, Motomby and Charley on the coastal belt; Hon. S.E. Ncha, Peter Eno, S.E.M. Agbor, and the rest in the Mamfe area; Prince Sarna Ndi in the Bamenda highlands and hundreds of unnamed youths across the land were at last forcing wide cracks in the ramparts of the KNC. In 1955, J.N. Foncha and A.N. Jua, both members of the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly, broke away from Endeley's KNC and formed the Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP). It was big news for the KPP at last. The KNC now faced a war on two fronts, and our relief was understandably great. Foncha and Jua were hammering away at the KNC from the North and in the House of Assembly, while we of the KPP steadied our fire from the South, though still largely outside the House. Could the KNC withstand this war on two fronts from a two pronged KPP/KNDP opposition? This was the question on every lip.

Our initial joy at the birth of the KNDP however had one significant reserve. The ideology of that party sounded further from the KPP than that of our principal political adversary, the KNC. The KNDP stood for total secession from Nigeria and re-unification of the Southern Cameroons with the then Cameroun under French Trusteeship. The cry sounded far and distant from that of our existing foe. Yet, there was the human consolation, at least for the time being, that the enemy of your enemy was your friend, even if he spoke a language you may not understand. There was always the lingering hope that, once the immediate foe was overcome, there would be time to learn to understand even the babbling of your new found friend. But this distant hope of ours lost sight of the well-worn adage that, the devil you know must be preferred to an angel you do not know. For the moment however, the arrival of the KNDP was duly greeted with joy, as our purpose to see the KNC down was too strong to bother about any ideological differences concerning this new arrival. It was with these conflicting thoughts that we faced the coming of the KNDP into the scene of Southern Cameroons politics in 1955.

The two KNDP founders, Hon. J. N. Foncha and Hon. A.N. Jua added one significant leverage to the voice of the opposition; they had seats in the House of Assembly in Buea. From this vantage point, the voice of the opposition was now being more loudly heard within the chambers of the legislature of Southern Cameroons, so, ideology apart, a new dimension was now added to the punch of the opposition in criticising the running of the KNC Government, at least on domestic issues. The gallery of the House of Assembly during meetings was now overflowing with visitors who came to see and hear for the first time, the voice of a much strengthened opposition within Parliament. Indeed, the scene was gradually changing from the dull earlier one-sided KNC legislature, to something more lively and more in keeping with the Westminster tradition of parliamentary politics which an all KNC House had hitherto been distorting. Observers began to see the beginning of parliamentary democracy at work and KPP followers longed for the day when the voice of that party leadership would also be heard within the chambers of the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly. From the way events were fast unfolding, that day was not far to come.

1957 London Conference

In discussing the matter of constitutional advancement, and the conferences that handled this question, it is important to stress the point, especially for students, that the Constitutional Conference as such did not write the actual letter of the constitution. The politicians agreed on the main issues and broad recommendations while the actual writing of the letter of the constitution was left to legal draftsmen who were experts on the job. The conclusions and recommendations of a conference were recorded in a Report, which were then translated into the actual letter and detail of the constitution.

For instance, the London Conference on the Nigerian Constitution held in July and August, 1953, recommended that “there should be a Federal Constitution in Nigeria with specified powers vested in the Federal Government, certain powers held concurrently by the Federal and Regional Governments, and residual powers resting with the Federal Government. It was also recommended that the Southern Cameroons should have quasi-Federal status. Lagos, on an award by the United Kingdom Government, was to become Federal Territory.” These broad agreements were then written out into detail in legal form, and by Orders-in Council, came into force. The new constitution based on these recommendations and on those of the resumed Conference held in Lagos in January and February 1954, came into force on 1st October, 1954.

Paragraph 27 of the Report of the 1953 conference in London had recorded that:

“... In addition, the conference agreed to recommend that, a conference consisting of delegations from each Region of the Federation, chosen by their respective governments in such a manner as to ensure adequate representation of all shades of political opinion in the Federation, should be convened in Nigeria not more than three years from the 31st August, 1953, for the purpose of reviewing the constitution and examining the question of Self - Government.

In January, 1956, the necessary consultation took place between the Nigerian Governments and the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and the time of mid-September, 1956, was first agreed. Later, the Secretary of State for the Colonies announced postponement of the conference to 23rd May, 1957, in Lancaster House, London. Composition was agreed at ten delegates and five advisers from each of the three Regions, and five delegates and three advisers from the Southern Cameroons. Lagos was represented by two delegates. In addition, the Governor General and the three Regional Governors, the Commissioner of the Cameroons, two leading Federal

Ministers, leader of the opposition in the Federal House of Representatives were invited. The United Kingdom delegation of ten had thirteen advisers.

The Southern Cameroons contingent comprised the following:

Kamerun National Congress

The Honourable Dr. E.M.L. Endeley, O.B.E., M.H.A.

V.S. Galega, Fon of Bali

Mr. J.T. Ndze

The Honourable V.E. Mukete, M.H.R. (Adviser)

Kamerun National Democratic Party

J.N. Foncha, M.H.A.

A. N. Jua, M.H.A. (Adviser)

Kamerun Peoples Party

Mr. P.M. Kale

Mr. N.N. Mbile (Adviser)

Officials

Mr. J.O. Field, Commissioner of the Cameroons

Mr. J. Murray, Southern Cameroons

The conference met at Lancaster House, London and held twenty-one plenary sessions between 23rd May and 26th June 1957. Apart from the plenary sessions, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, the Rt. Honourable Alan Lennox Boyd, M.P., held a series of separate discussions with the delegates from Southern Cameroons.

At the conclusion of the discussions, the Secretary of State came out with the following statement of which the conference later took note, about the future position of the Trust Territory when Nigeria became independent:

“Her Majesty’s Government fully recognises their obligations to the Cameroons under the Trusteeship Agreement.”

“One of these obligations has been and is to administer the territory as an integral part of Nigeria. This has of course, been on the assumption that Nigeria was a dependent territory. When Nigeria becomes an independent country, this arrangement will no longer be possible, so the Trusteeship Agreement will in any case have to be reviewed at that stage.”

"When Nigeria becomes independent, one possibility will be that the Cameroons should remain part of it. This will involve the termination of the Trusteeship Agreement and would require consultation with the United Nations. I can state quite categorically that there can be no question of obliging the Cameroons to remain part of an independent Nigeria contrary to her own wishes."

"Before Nigeria becomes independent, the people of the north and south sectors of the Cameroons would have to say freely what their wishes were as to their own future. Among the options open to them would be to continue under the Trusteeship Administration of the United Kingdom. I must in fairness add the warning that you would not thereby be given the golden key to the Bank of England; but many of the best friends of the Cameroons do not foresee a destiny more likely to promote her happiness and prosperity than in continued association with Nigeria."

"Her Majesty's Government will of course pay the very greatest regard to their wishes, whatever form they may take."

As the position of the Cameroons was not by any means as complex as in the three Regions, the Cameroons delegates quickly reached agreement on the following and these were endorsed by the conference:

a) The term "quasi-federal territory" would be dropped and the Territory would be known as the Southern Cameroons.

b) In view of the Governor General's position as the principal representative of Her Majesty in the Federation and his special responsibilities in relation to Her Majesty's Governments' obligations under the Trusteeship Agreement, the Governor General would remain responsible for matters within the competence of the Southern Cameroons Government. In discharging these responsibilities, he would be styled High Commissioner for the Southern Cameroons. The Commissioner of the Cameroons would remain responsible to the high Commissioner.

c) The Commissioner would continue to be Her Majesty's Government Special Representative at the United Nations for the Trust Territory as a whole.

d) The elected membership of the House of Assembly would be increased from 13 to 26. The three ex-officio Members would remain and there would continue to be provision for two Special Members to represent interests or communities not otherwise adequately represented. There would be no Native Authority Members. The Commissioner would be empowered, after consultation with the Premier, to appoint a Speaker, either from within or without the House, who would normally preside. The Commissioner would continue to preside until a Speaker was appointed.

e) There would be a House of Chiefs consisting of approximately twenty members but in any event of not less than three members from each Division. The Commissioner, after enquiry and consultation with those concerned, would determine

the number of members and their method of selection and would establish the House as soon as practicable. The functions of the House would be to consider and by resolution, to advise on any question referred to it by the Commissioner or any question or matter introduced by a member. The House would consider proposed legislation and other important matters of policy, and its resolutions would be laid on the table of the House of Assembly when it would be open to the Government or any member of that House to take them up. Members of the Executive Council would be entitled to attend the House of Chiefs but not to vote. The life of the House of Chiefs would be coterminous with that of the House of Assembly and, at least, initially the Commissioner would preside.

f) The Executive Council would have an unofficial majority. It would consist of the Commissioner as President, three ex-officio members and five unofficial members of whom one would be styled Premier and the others Ministers. The High Commissioner, in his discretion, could increase the number of Ministers following a recommendation from the Commissioner after consultation with his Executive Council. He would appoint the Ministers on the recommendation of the Premier.

g) The Executive Council would be the principal instrument of policy for the Southern Cameroons and the Commissioner would have reserved executive powers similar to those of Regional Governors under the 1954 constitution with the addition that, he would be required to comply with any directions given him by the High Commissioner in the interest of the Federation or because of the United Kingdom Government's responsibilities under the Trusteeship Agreement.

h) Public officers in the Southern Cameroons would remain members of the Federal Public Service and provision would be made to enable a sub committee of the Federal Public Service Commission to be set up in the Southern Cameroons to advise on certain appointments provided for in the Southern Cameroons estimates. (The Governor General undertook to keep in mind the possibility of finding a suitably qualified Southern Cameroonians for appointment to the Federal Public Service Commission).

Senate Representation

The Conference agreed to the representation of Southern Cameroons by 12 members as was the number for each Region, but agreed that the whole question of representation in the Senate would be subject to reconsideration if new states were created as the result of the report of the Minorities Commission.

Chapter Seven

Elections 1957-1959 and Constitutional Matters

One of the decisions taken at the Lagos Constitutional Conference 1954 was that “The life of this first Assembly should end not later than the 31st of December, 1956.” This referred to the House of Assembly of the thirteen members who had won their seats through the Eastern House of Assembly, Enugu, in 1953. Due to official delays, this date of 31st December, 1956 was far exceeded and elections in accordance with the 1953 (London) and 1954 (Lagos) decisions were not held in the territory until far into 1957; actually after the 1957 constitutional conference of May and June, London, which itself had recommended further constitutional advancement for the territory.

On the 16th August 1956, the Governor General had issued an Order-in-Council for Elections (Southern Cameroons House of Assembly) Regulations, 1956, to come into force as from 1st September 1956. The main features of these Regulations were the introduction of the system of direct elections, and that of single member constituencies. Hitherto, all elections had been by the indirect system of electors being chosen from electoral areas, and these electors then proceeding to vote for candidates to the Assembly from Divisional Electoral Meetings. The weakness of this system was that, a candidate with a bigger following from the population could lose to one with less popular following, but who could influence and obtain a majority from the smaller Electoral meeting. For instance, A and B candidates begin a race for a seat from their Division into electoral area 1 to 10. If there is a contest in the ten areas there could be the following results:

Electoral Area	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Popular Vote A	18	50	40	30	10	80	90	14	29	20	1481
Electors Vote B	10	5 ^B	8 ^B	12	10	6 ^B	8 ^B	12 ^B	10	14	94
Popular Vote B	14	10	20	60	12	10	15	15	15	21	1250

Elections, 1957-1959, and Constitutional Matters

Results: A 32 electors, 1481 popular votes

B 62 electors, 1250 popular votes

The absurdity of this system can be seen. Candidate A with a larger popular vote of 1481 loses to candidate B with a smaller vote of 1250, but scoring 62 electors to 32 for A. In Democracy, this is repugnant. The new electoral law provided for direct elections based on tax suffrage and instead of voting for two or more candidates together, the territory was carved into thirteen single member constituencies as follows:

Victoria South, Victoria North

Kumba East, Kumba West

Mamfe South East, Mamfe North West

Bamenda East, Bamenda West, Bamenda Central

Wum South, Wum North

Nkambe North East, Nkambe South West

When the date for the 1957 elections was announced, I and the new electoral law showed us the green light, the KNC/KNDP/KPP stalwarts went eagerly to war against themselves. My constituency of Kumba West was there for me, KPP to slug it out with Mr. J.M. Bokwe of the KNC for the Victoria, Motomby-Woleta, KPP locked horns against E.K. Martin, KNC for the Victoria South seat, while at Buea, P.M. Kale, the KPP leader fought it out with Dr. Endeley, KNC in the Victoria North constituency. Chief R.N Charley, KPP took on F.N. Ajebe Sone, KNC, for the Kumba East seat. In Mamfe, S.A. Arrey, KNC stood in the N.E. constituency against S.E. Ncha, KPP while Ambrose Fonge stood for the S.E. seat, for the KNDP.

In Bamenda Division, and that province as a whole, the KPP did not field direct candidates, except in the case of Prince Sama Ndi of Kom, our steadfast comrade who stood in Wum. With the arrival of the KNDP, our attitude was- to do nothing that could reduce their chances of winning as many seats as possible in the one time KNC exclusive province of Bamenda. Even though we had no formal alliance with them, it was regarded good tactics to maintain this silent understanding with the KNDP, in the hope that, if things worked out right and we could muster a majority with them, we may reach some working arrangements in a Government wrested from the KNC.

The 1957 Campaigns

The campaigns themselves were interesting. Each party had its symbol; for KNC, the banana tree; for KPP, a red cockerel and for KNDP, a green twig in a calabash. Posters showing these symbols were put up everywhere; on tree trunks, on walls, on vehicles. Campaign meetings were organised all over the territory by each party, where speakers addressed the population to explain their policies and solicit votes for their candidates. Land Rovers fitted with loud speaking equipment plied up and down giving information on the campaigns. Even though the election campaigns sounded bitter and acrimonious, there was always some element of humour, laughter and song that accompanied the meetings. Patriotic songs were composed and sung at gatherings.

KPP Song

The KPP song ran as follows:

*Join the KPP, make no delay,
Join the force of truth and sacrifice
Join the crusade for our freedom drive
Till victory is won*

Chorus: *Tell our sons and daughters everywhere,
Now's the time or never in our lives,
To save our country, from foreign rule,
Under the KPP*

The KPP anthem composed by P.I. Eno was lustily sung across the land, generally signalling the opening or closing of a campaign meeting. So it went until Election Day, but the rules forbade campaign meetings after sundown on the eve of Election Day. Voting itself was done in secret in booths where the candidates each had a ballot box with his symbol firmly fixed on it so that voters could clearly identify the boxes of their chosen candidates.

For the 1957 elections, polling was in March and as was usual, polling stations opened early in the morning, and closed by six O'clock

in the evening. Counting of votes was only done by the Divisional Electoral Officers at their Divisional offices. All ballot boxes had to be carried there all the way from the polling stations of each Division. It was a serious operation involving days of trekking for many areas.

Kumba West, my constituency bounded with Calabar Division to the West and with Mamfe Division to the north, was particularly difficult for those bringing ballot boxes to Kumba. The task however had to be done and the boxes came in. When the last one arrived, the counting commenced in the presence of the candidates and or their agents.

Soon, results began to come in:

Victoria North – Dr. E.M.L. Endeley, KNC elected

Victoria South – P.N Motomby-Woleta, KPP elected

Kumba East – F.N. Ajebe-Sone, KNC elected

Kumba West – N.N. Mbile, KPP elected

Mamfe South East – Ambrose Fonge, KNDP elected

Mamfe North East – S.A. Arrey, KNC elected

Bamenda East – V.T. Lainjo, KNC elected

Bamenda West – S.T. Muna, KNC elected

Bamenda Central – J.N. Foncha, KNDP elected

Wum South – A.N. Jua, KNDP elected

Wum North – P.N. Mua, KNDP elected

Nkambe North East – Rev. Ando Seh, KNC elected

Nkambe South East – J.N. Nsame, KNDP elected

The results in respect of the thirteen constituencies were, KNC 6, KNDP 5, KPP 2.

We Attempt a KNDP/ KPP Government

Of the thirteen elective seats, the KPP/KNDP opposition captured seven against six of the KNC and we ventured to demand from the Commissioner of the Cameroons that the KNDP/KPP be called upon to form the Government at Buea. The Commissioner refused our request on the ground that, the constitution recognised all the twenty-one members (13 elected, 6 N.A., 2 Special) as the House of Assembly and therefore the issue of forming the Government could not depend only on the thirteen elective seats. When the six N.A. members were finally selected, they all declared for the KNC and so,

Dr. Endeley was reappointed Leader of Government Business.

Motomby and Mbile Returned

The House of Assembly was however, now greatly changed with an opposition of seven elected members but the biggest news of all, was the return to the House of Assembly of P.N. Motomby-Woleta and N.N. Mbile, since their defeat in 1953. The galleries were overflowing with visitors who came to see and hear the new House at work, particularly the voices of these KPP men.

Indeed, the two KPP men had a special appeal; they had been part of the NCNC front bench in the Eastern House of Assembly at Enugu, and when it came to grasp of the Standing Orders of the House and skill in parliamentary debate, there was a great deal the KPP boys could offer to listeners even in the public gallery. Justice Sainsbury, Speaker of the Assembly at one time, gave a special commendation to Mr. P.N. Motomby-Woleta in appreciation of this member's contribution and brilliance. Needless to say that the concentrated fire of the opposition, especially of the KPP flank was directed forcefully at Dr. Endeley, Leader of Government, and to a lesser degree at members of his Executive Council. This part of the story would be incomplete if I do not admit that for Motomby and I, we had years of political pent-up scores to settle with Dr. Endeley. Now we were squarely face to face with him on the floor of the House of Assembly. Our constant fire did not therefore spare him, until the passage of time had served to reduce the intensity of years of acrimony, and had healed at least some of our political wounds.

Ideological Conflict – KPP / KNDP

The three political groups in the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly had an interesting ideological contradiction. The KNC stood for continued association with Nigeria, the KPP was for this same objective, but the KNDP stood for secession from Nigeria and re-unification with Cameroun then under French Trusteeship. As a result of this ideological conflict, the KPP and the KNDP even though both in opposition found little ground in working together on one political plank. Both parties criticised the KNC Government on domestic issues involving daily running of affairs of state etc., but our voices

became most discordant when we faced the issue of the future course of the territory. This was a question we could not ignore, for the voice of change was on every lip. The problem was further complicated by the links between these parties with other political allies outside the House of Assembly.

For the KNC, the Action Group of Western Nigeria was their ally (an alliance between Dr. Endeley's KNC and Chief Obafemi Awolowo had been signed since 1954) while the KPP was well known to be pro NCNC since 1953. However, it soon became clear where the ideological dividing line stood between the groups. We may be using the word ideology possibly for want of a better terminology.

As a result of this ideological triangle in the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly, we found the two opposition parties at times violently at each other, and at other times the KPP and KNC speaking with one voice against the KNDP although in the main, the KPP/KNDP combined opposition faced the KNC. This is the position that faced the new House of Assembly at Buea in 1957 and it clearly showed how a KPP/KNDP coalition Government would have floundered if it had taken office. On the other hand, we all saw too distinctly that the only question that now kept KNC and KPP apart was the deep personal differences that years of fighting had created between Dr. Endeley on one side and Motomby, Kale and the vilest attack from men who were openly abusing even those who had given them official refuge.

Our reply was simple. Re-unification however pleasant could not be immediate, if it was to be at all. Certain pre-requisites were at least pertinent in trying to bring together people who had been brought up under two violently opposite systems for the best part of half a century. The very conduct of the UPC and OK in condemning all those who did not agree with them, was the first reason why we doubted the sincerity of their slogans. The point was clear, if men enjoying hospitality as refugees in Southern Cameroons could deny their hosts the right to hold contrary views to theirs, then such people deserved caution to befriend.

The activities of the UPC in Southern Cameroons reached a point where Government was forced to act in the interest of those to whom it owed responsibility. The group was finally declared illegal in Southern Cameroons. The One Kamerun (OK) of Mr. Ntumazah, however, continued to exist as a legal party. Led by Southern

Cameroonians, the OK enjoyed the right to exist in the land of its birth even if it pursued a policy that most of its countrymen little understood. This must go to the eternal credit of the Endeley Government of the KNC.

The Wind of Change

By the years 1957/58, there was sweeping through many parts of Africa, the now historic “wind of change.” Ghana under Kwarne Nkrumah had got independence from Britain; Nigeria was seething with impatience and demanding a firm date for independence from Her Majesty’s Government. British Cameroons, administered as an integral part of Nigeria since 1916, was faced with the choice of either attaining independence by joining the now Republic of Cameroun, or doing so, through continued association with Nigeria. Even the French community of states were restless for independence from France and General De Gaulle in 1958, organised a referendum amongst the French colonial territories offering independence from France to anyone who wished it. Guinea of Sekou Toure seized the offer.

Close to the Cameroons, Zik of Nigeria was pressing hard for a date for Nigeria’s independence. The other Nigerian leaders, Awolowo and Ahmadou Bello, had to double march to keep in step with the giant strides of Nnamdi Azikiwe on the issue of Self-Government and independence for their country. Fortunately for the Cameroons, the thirst for freedom caught us through a two pronged influence from Nigeria in the West and the UPC from the East. Here, we must face the hard truth whatever opinion we may hold about the NCNC and the UPC that we owe to them infinite thanks for rousing our hitherto sleeping tribesmen into realising the thirst for political freedom. The Southern Cameroons through the various constitutional conferences of Nigeria on her march to Independence, won in a few years almost without a fight, political rights and advancement for which others shed sacred blood to secure. Like the fortunate lad who travelled with the strong muscular grown-ups, he crossed raging streams and scaled hills and mountains that he, travelling alone, would never have dared. Indeed, marching along with Nigeria, we only required to ask, and the British Government was willing to grant our constitutional and political demands.

Actually, by the time we were contesting the 1957 elections to the

Southern Cameroons House of Assembly, we already had in the bag, from the 1957 London talks, a new constitutional arrangement verging on Self-Government for Southern Cameroons; An enlarged House of Assembly of 26 elected members, Ministerial Government, headed by a Premier, a House of Chiefs, a High Commissioner for Southern Cameroons, unofficial exco majority etc. All these were only awaiting legal draftsmen to put the proposals into proper form, and for the necessary processes of the Governor's assent, to put the new arrangements into force. Clearly, constitutional advance for the territory was proceeding fast, and this was largely dictated by the pace of the constitutional advancement of the other Regions of Nigeria, and of Nigeria itself.

At the 1953 London Conference both Eastern and Western Nigeria had opted for Self-Government, by 1956, while the Northern Region did not ask for Self-Government before 1959. The actual decision had read in 1953 as follows: *'The conference eventually accepted a declaration of policy that in 1956 Her Majesty's Government would grant to those Regions which desired it full Self-Government in respect of all matters within the competence of the Regional Governments, with the proviso that there should be safeguards to ensure that the Regional Governments did not act so as to impede or prejudice the exercise by the Federal Government of the functions assigned to it now, or as amended by agreement in the future, or in any way make the continuance of Federation impossible.'*

Accordingly, the 1957 conference concluded, *"The Western and Eastern Regional Governments asked for the implementation, following the present conference, of this undertaking by Her Majesty's Government. The Northern Region Government did not ask for Regional Self-Government before 1959, and the interim changes they proposed are dealt with in paragraph 21 and 22 below. The conference then discussed the constitution of self-governing Regions, and reached agreement as follows: "This included amendment of the constitution and the powers to make laws for Nigeria; the appointment and emoluments of the Governor and Deputy Governor, the powers and duties of the Governor, special members of Legislative Houses, Her Majesty's power to disallow Regional legislation; Safeguards for Federation. To hasten the process of Self-Government, while the main Constitutional Order in Council, 1954, was being amended in order to give effect to Premiers of the Eastern and Western Regions to preside in Executive Council."*

The Endeley – Galega Story

One of my pursuits in this work is to keep the records straight in some of the untruths in our Cameroon political story where I know the honest facts, especially where I was an eyewitness. Such is the case of the untruth that Dr. Endeley once used Galega, the Fon of Bali, "like a house boy." Nothing can be further from the truth not only in the practical impossibility of such an event, but in the complete absence of any context in which such a strange happening could have taken place.

To appreciate the real magnitude of the falsehood, one should begin from x-raying who Dr. Endeley was against who Galega the F on of Bali was. In this exercise, let me begin with Dr. E.M.L. Endeley who was Leader of Government Business from 1954-1958, the period of his close contact with Galega, the Fon of Bali. Dr. Endeley had won the October 26th 1953 elections to the Eastern House of Assembly Enugu with 12 seats, and S.E. Ncha, was an independent. He, Dr Endeley, became Leader of Government Business from 1954-1958 with four African members of the Executive Council interested in certain subjects. The Commissioner of the Cameroons was still President of the Executive Council with power to veto any issue on which he did not agree with the Executive Council where three British Officials were also members. In effect the Commissioner of the Cameroons was not only the Chief Executive in the territory representing Her Majesty's Government, he was President of the House of Assembly and of the Executive Council of eight, with an extra (casting) vote. Dr. Endeley was therefore only nominally Leader of Government Business with no real power by that time.

V.S. Galega II, Fon of Bali, had been a member of the Eastern House of Assembly Enugu along with Chief Manga Williams during the Richard's constitution days before 1951. He was easily the most powerful natural ruler in the Bamenda Province, not only highly respected by the British Government both in the territory and in the mother country, but by the Cameroon population of the day. A giant of a man, he was magnificently built and looked an "African King" indeed, admired by all who met him. At the 1957 London Conference, he was a fellow Delegate on the same footing as Dr. Endeley along with Mr. J.T. Ndze, while Hon. V.E. Mukete M.H.R. a Federal Minister in Lagos was Adviser to the KNC Delegation.

The curtsies enjoyed in London by Dr. Endeley during the conference compared no less with those accorded the Fon and the

Commissioner Mr. J.O. Field. These three (Endeley, the Fon and the Commissioner) enjoyed a car each while we the rest shared two to a car. In the Hotel, St. James' Court, Buckingham Gate, where the delegations stayed as guests of Her Majesty's Government of the United Kingdom, the three were lodged in complete suites while we the rest stayed in single rooms and shared parlours. Galega II had something we the rest almost envied. He was treated everywhere in London with special respect, crowned by the almost daily visits of students who constantly called at the Hotel to pay him homage.

At the Constitutional Conference in London in 1957, relevant to the Endeley/Galega story, this was the position:

KNC: Dr E.M.I. Endeley – Delegate

V.S. Galega II Fon of Bali – Delegate

J.T. Ndze – Delegate

Hon. V.E. Mukete M.H.R. – Adviser

KNDP: J.N. Foncha M.H.A – Delegate

A.N. Jua M.H.A. – Adviser

KPP: P.M. Kale – Delegate

N.N. Mbile – Adviser

on the side of service at the hotel, those who know or have had the slightest experience of the efficiency of service in any ordinary hotel in Britain should multiply that by two to equal the service standards at St. James' Court Hotel, London. No guest ever undertook any self-service no matter how small. Even shoes were merely left at the door of one's room and in the morning, they would be as smooth as glass.

There can be no question therefore of a guest serving another guest at St. James'. If any such guest existed to serve another, the chance of such a man being the Fon of Bali just could not exist. Having eliminated London's St. James' Court Hotel from the venues where Galega II could have ever possibly served Endeley "like a house boy," we are left with Buea as the only other place where Endeley owned a place where he could need a house boy. If anyone were foolish enough to tell us that it could have perhaps been at Buea where Fon Galega was used by Endeley as house boy, such a story teller should tell the world how the Fon of Bali could have fitted into the lowly home of Dr. Endeley at Buea possibly to wash plates or other chores with the entire Bali world and the retinue of attendants who generally accompanied the Fon wherever he went, just looking on?

One KNDP man, cornered over this concoction, tried to ask if it was not possible that Dr. Endeley may have given the Fon his bag to hold at the airport. Such a possibility could not exist in this world against the truth that Dr. Endeley had his Private Secretary Mr. S.N. Ekobena to have carried such a bag. There were also the other Cameroonian delegates along with the crowds who always came to the airport to welcome arriving dignitaries like Endeley and Fon Galega, if the bag had been too much for Endeley's own hands to bear. Those who know who a Fon was/is vis-à-vis a mere politician like Endeley will tell you that the possibility of even a small Chief serving any politician at that time like a house boy was one chance in a million.

A doubting Thomas despite the above explanation still asked, "but what could have been the background or premise for such a bare faced lie"? Of course there was, and this was it. The KNDP needed some desperate story with which to tear the Bali from continuing to support Dr. Endeley and his KNC at a time when they found the Bali firm in his support. Note the place enjoyed by the Fon of Bali on the KNC delegation to London in 1957. The shortest cut for KNDP strategists to win the Bali was to tell that proud tribe of people that Endeley had ill-treated their Fon by using him "like a house boy." The trick worked; the Bali felt insulted and they stampeded into the KNDP and the KNC lost their support in the Bamenda area. Such was the extent of the Bali U-turn that Endeley could hardly see any reason to retain Fon Galega on his next delegation to London in 1958. He now turned to the Fon of Bum to court the people of Wum.

Actually as if to assist the KNDP tricksters the Fon of Bali during the London Conference in 1957 had been observed in what looked like secret meetings with the KNDP. My own calculation here is that whatever the KNDP may have done, the Bamenda students then in Britain had been working on the Fon during their constant visits to him at St. James' Court Hotel and had succeeded in turning his support away from Dr. Endeley.

I am offering this view as an eyewitness to what was going on around us and from my comparative closeness to Fon Galega with whom I had visited London in 1955 when we were members of the CDC Board. Many of those Bamenda students had seen the launching of the KNDP by Foncha and Jua as the beginning of their "empire" and were eager to see the KNDP topple Endeley. Actually they succeeded in the end to see the realisation of their design in the fall of

Endeley in January 1959. Many of those students had by then returned to the territory and were holding strategic civil service appointments.

It is some of these people who often secretly continued to advise the KNDP as the “Cameroon Society.” They preferred to keep their group secret in order to avoid the risks which their British training had taught them could afflict civil servants meddling in party politics. As to whether such advice served a lasting purpose is hardly worthy of debate, but if three decades later some of the KNDP founders had openly told the world that they were “mere grade II teachers” who could not quite understand, since they had “no lawyers,” it seems to confirm the lack of enduring benefit from counsel proffered in the shadows.

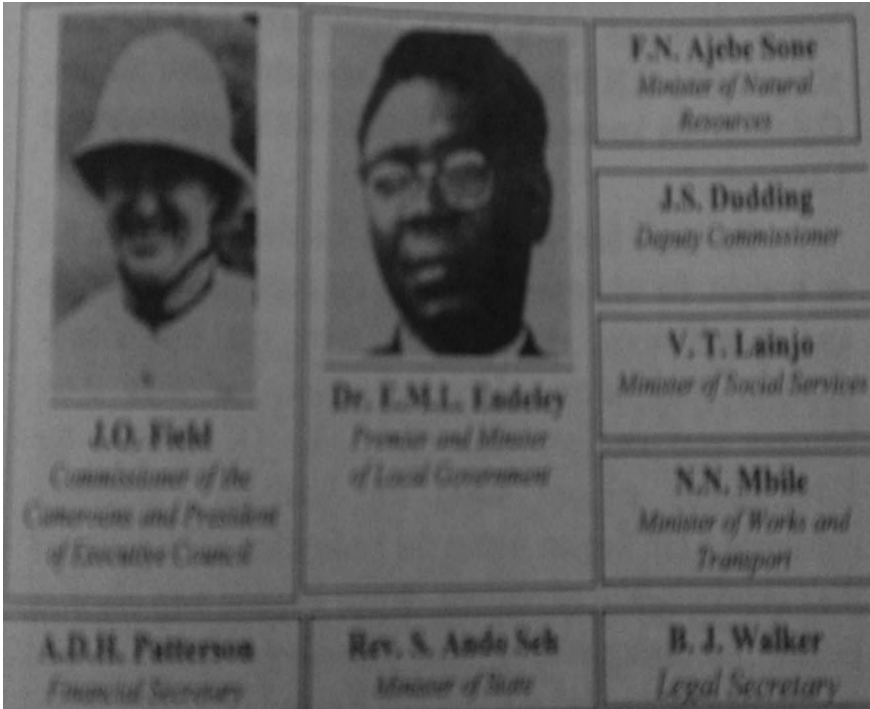
It also teaches men especially the young, not to count on lasting benefit from untruths and falsehood. Today it is no secret any more, especially to the intelligent Bali, that the story of Endeley using Fon Galega as a “house boy” is a monumental falsehood, just as it is, to say that we did not understand the plebiscite questions, since we had no lawyers, even though lawyers Endeley, Mensah, Egbe, Dinka, Engo and others had by that year long returned to the Cameroons.

Endeley Installed Premier

The 1957 constitutional arrangements for Southern Cameroons came into force on 15th May 1958. Immediately, the following were put into effect. Dr. E.M.L. Endeley was installed Premier. Members of Executive Council became Ministers. The Government was enlarged to include a member of the KPP, Mr. N.N. Mbile. Introduction of the Ministerial System of Government at Buea resulted in the following:

Dr. E.M.I. Endeley – Premier and Minister of Local Government
V.T. Lainjo – Minister of Natural Resources
F.N. Ajebe-Sone – Minister in charge of Education
N.N. Mbile – Minister of Works and Transport
Rev. Ando She – Minister Without Portfolio
J.O. Field – Commissioner of the Cameroons, President of Council
J.S. Dudding – Deputy Commissioner
A.D.H. Patterson – Financial Secretary
B.J. Walker – Legal Secretary

Dr. E.M.L. Endeley - Premier Endeley's Government – 1958



New Ideological Battle Line

The new Government under Premier Endeley moved forward to consolidate the policy of Southern Cameroons existing as a Region in the Federation of Nigeria. The KNC and KPP formed a political alliance between them to run the Government at Buea, and to press on with the introduction of the other decisions taken at the 1957 London talks.

The issue of Independence was looming larger and larger before us in the advancing horizon. Intense pressure was being built up by the KNDP/UPC/OK groups in direct opposition to the continued existence of Southern Cameroons in the Federation of Nigeria. Cameroonians were clearly polarising on two clear fronts in the choice of a future for the territory. Mr. S. T. Muna who had remained with Dr. Endeley at the time Foncha and Jua formed the KNDP, at last broke off from him and declared for the KNDP of Foncha, about March, 1958. By the time Dr. Endeley was sworn in as Premier, on 15th May 1958, Mr. S.T. Muna was in full arms with the KNDP against the KNC/KPP alliance. The KNDP slogan was secession from Nigeria. OK stood for immediate re-unification with the Republic of Cameroun.

The battle line was now drawn but the issues were not so straight, for while the OK were for immediate secession and re-unification, the KNDP were not that clearly decided. They advocated re-unification, but were more hesitant and cautious than the OK of course, the KNC/KPP – alliance stood for Southern Cameroons remaining a full Region within the Federation of Nigeria and the Commonwealth of Nations. While Nigeria was pressing Britain for independence, the Cameroons question had therefore to be decided early so that it could be known where the territory would be. As reflected in the statement by Mr. Allan Lennox Boyd, Secretary of State for the Colonies at the 1957 constitutional conference in London, the options for Southern Cameroons were either in continued British Trusteeship or in independence with Nigeria when she had it.

The KNC/KPP alliance was stoutly against any option that would extend the period of colonial status for Southern Cameroons even by a day after Nigeria attained independence. History had shown that

colonial powers were always reluctant to grant independence, and if the opportunity to attain it with Nigeria was missed it might become more difficult for Southern Cameroons to cross the current alone. Generations of Cameroonians would then blame us for choosing continued colonial servitude for them instead of striking for freedom with the rest. As a matter of fact, the alliance contended that rather than accept continued Trusteeship which was synonymous with continued servitude, "let Southern Cameroons make a clear choice for Independence either with Nigeria or with the Republic of Cameroun." Pressure was also building up at the United Nations where Mr. Ntumazah and the UPC were regular visitors, for a clear choice to be taken on the territory's future.

London Constitutional Conference 1958

This is the stage at which matters stood in 1958 when another Nigerian Constitutional Conference was convened to sit in the summer of that year in Lancaster House, London. The main question at this 1958 Conference concerned the issue of a firm decision and date for Independence for Nigeria. Naturally, the pace was quickened for the Southern Cameroons question to be resolved, and the Cameroons contingent took their places as usual in London.

The Southern Cameroons Delegation:

KNC: Dr E.M.I. Endeley, M.H.A, Premier Southern Cameroons – Delegate

Mr. P.A. Ayuk, M.H.R. – Delegate

Mr. J.T. Ndze – Delegate

Fon John Yai, Fon of Bum – Adviser

KPP: Mr. P.M. Kale – Delegate

Mr. N.N. Mbile, M.H.A, Minister of Works and Transport S.C. – Adviser

KNDP: Mr. J.N. Foncha, M.H.A. – Delegate

Mr. A.N. Jua, M.H.A. – Adviser



Some Cameroon Delegates during the 1958 Constitutional Conference, Lancaster House - London (left to right) J. T. Nze, P.A. Ayuk, Fon of Bum, NN Mbile, P. M Kale.

Mr. P.M. Kale and I chose to travel by sea from Tiko to Britain. We boarded a Banana boat at Tiko from where it sailed out and docked at San Carlos on the West Coast of Fernando Po Island to pick up a load of bananas) The shore was only a bare hundred yards off, but the Spanish authorities refused to let us land when they learnt that both Mr. Kale and I were travelling to Britain and that we were politicians. A very long nine hours finally expired and we lifted anchor and steamed off. In nine days, we anchored at Dakar - Senegal. There, we were allowed to land and taxied to the city where I was struck by the following: the large population of whites, the long gowns and large ringed earrings worn by the women, and the sharp contrast in prosperity, between white and black. We sat for coffee at a hotel, and were astonished by the abnormal number of shoeshine Senegalese boys. Coffee for three and a small beer was our order. We paid the

service one pound and received 1/6d⁴ for change. On the walls and on the streets, we saw slogans written in chalk and on enquiring, we learnt that they were hostile declarations against De Gaulle in his now historic independence offer to French colonies at the time. The urban crowds of Dakar had said “yes” for independence, but the rural populations had drowned this by their massive “no” preferring continued French rule. This was Senegal in 1958 when Sekou Toure of Guinea struck for Independence and got it like a hot potato thrown by an unhappy boss, into the hands of a hasty hungry lad.

From here we sailed North West along the African coast, passed Las Palmas and the Straights of Gibraltar, across the Bay of Biscay, and hit the foggy coast of England. We finally docked in Avon-Mouth, Bristol, six days after

Dakar. When Ndze, Aiyuk and others came from London to pick us up by car from the docks at Bristol, they could hardly recognise us. We had added pounds of weight in fifteen days in a banana boat. In less than two hours; we were with the rest of the Cameroon Delegation in London listening to stories about home, from those who had left Cameroon only the day before by air. It was a pleasant trip by sea from Tiko to Bristol, but fifteen days felt like the other extreme to the less than ten hours by plane between Tiko and London, taken by the other Cameroonians.

⁴ Receiving change of one shilling and six pence (1/6d), meant that we paid eighteen shillings and six pence for three coffees and one small beer. One shilling equals 12 pence.



In London during the 1958 Constitutional Conference. London (left to right) Mr. Paul Engo, Hon. A.N Jua, Hon. P. Aiyuk, Hon NN Mbile, Barrister E.K. Mensah and Mr. P. M. Kale.

To most Cameroonian delegates, the 1958 Nigerian Constitutional Conference was one with a big difference from the earlier confabs. Part of the 1957 decisions had not yet been implemented; e.g. the Legislature had been enlarged to 26 elected members, but elections to this enlarged House was yet to be done. As a matter of fact, we were already poised for the campaigns to the enlarged House and were to embark on the elections as soon as we returned. Also the House of Chiefs agreed on in 1957 was yet to be established. Single member constituencies on the basis of 26 elected members for the territory had been agreed, but the details were yet to be worked out. Franchise hitherto restricted to men was extended to women and new lists were expected to reflect this. These decisions reached in regard to Southern Cameroons ranged from an enlarged House of twenty six members to that of a Premier with stronger powers, while in those that concerned Nigeria as a whole, the Regions obtained virtual Self-Government and Premiers, who were to be Heads of Government.

Foncha Wins the 1959 Elections

We returned from the 1958 London Conference fully poised for the general elections to the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly, now firmly based on 26 single member constituencies. For the first time, women were entitled to vote. The battle line was drawn. On the right, the KNC/KPP loose alliance in Government fielded candidates without strict regard to the understanding expected amongst allies. Although in Victoria South West Motomby- Woleta, KPP stood, the alliance failed to rally round a single candidate in respect of the Victoria South East seat. Instead, we fielded two men, Nambile, KPP and Dipoko, KNC The KNDP fielded one Mbua Monono from the CDC Ikange Workshops. In Victoria North West, we also had a problem between P.M. Kale, KPP and Dr. Endeley, KNC, but the KPP persuaded Kale, their leader to step down for Dr. Endeley. For Victoria North East, I found to my horror on the eve of that election that very little work had been done by the alliance and a meeting I scheduled at Ekona was foiled by KNDP thugs.

In Kumba, the two seats carved out of the former Kumba West were safe for the KPP My own Kumba North West seat was so safe that by the time nominations closed, it was clear that I had been returned unopposed. The Electoral Officer Kumba Division, Mr. J.J. Balmain invited me to his office and duly declared me elected to the House of Assembly. This gave me time to concentrate on the problem areas for the alliance in the forest area. I am not sure of any politician west of the Mungo who has equalled my record of being returned unopposed to parliament.

For Kumba East, the KPP stepped down Chief Charley to leave the seat for F.N. Ajebe-Sone (KNC) to fight it out, while in Kumba West, the KPP fielded H.N. Elangwe chemist and druggist, against J.M. Bokwe of the KNDP The KPP did not field any candidates in the Bamenda area, except Prince Sarna Ndi in Kom. We felt the KNC was competent to field candidates for the alliance in the Bamenda highlands since this had been one of their strongholds. Little did we realise how heavily eroded the ground was under the feet of the KNC

When Election Day arrived and the votes were counted, the electrifying news swept through the territory that Foncha's KNDP had won 14 seats to 12 of Endeley's KNC/KPP alliance. Mr. J.N. Foncha

therefore became Premier. Due to lack of full accord between them, the alliance had fielded opposing candidates in certain areas, thus splitting the alliance votes for the KNDP to win. This was what occurred in the Victoria South East constituency where, Narnbile and Dipoko split the alliance vote to enable Monono capture the seat. In Mamfe there was a similar split between KNC and KPP candidates to permit one D.M. Frambo to win. In Bamenda Division, the KNDP scored heavily in this one time KNC stronghold. The KNC's only win was V.T. Lainjo from Nso. In Wum, Rev. Kangsen (KNC) retained his seat as our only win from that Division, but in Nkambe, KNC stole the show, winning all the four seats there - Rev. Ando Seh, S. N. Tamfu, J. Nsame and Rev. Nyanganji.

Detailed Results:

Victoria

Dr E.M.L. Endeley, Victoria North West KNC elected
Mr P.N. Motomby-Woleta, Victoria South West KPP elected
Mr. M.N. Ndoke, Victoria North East KNDP elected
Mr. Mbua Monono, Victoria South East KNDP elected.

Kumba

Mr. N.N. Mbile, Kumba North West KPP elected
Mr. J.N. Nasako, Kumba South West KPP elected
Mr. F.N. Ajebe-Sone, Kumba East KNC elected
Mr. J.M. Bokwe, Kumba West KNDP elected
Mr. J.E. Sona, Kumba Central KNDP elected

Mamfe

Mr. S.E. Ncha, Mamfe North KPP elected
Mr. W.N.O. Effiom, Mamfe West KNDP elected
Mr. P.M. Kemcha, Mamfe East KNDP elected
Mr. D. Frambo, Mamfe South KNDP elected

Bamenda

Mr. J. N. Foncha, Bafut East KNDP elected
Mr. S.T. Muna, Bamenda West KNDP elected
Mr. V.T. Lainjo, Bamenda North KNC elected
Mr. J.H. Nganje, Bamenda Ndop West KNDP elected

Mr. W.S. Fonyonga, Bamenda South KNDP elected

Wum

Mr. A.N. Jua, Wum East KNDP elected

Mr. J.M. Boja Wum West KNDP elected

Rev. J.C. Kangsen, Wum Central KNC elected

Mr. S.N. Nji, Wum North KNDP elected

Nkambe

Rev. Ando Seh, Nkambe North KNC elected

Mr. J. Nsame, Nkambe South, KNC elected

Mr. S.N. Tamfu, Nkambe Central, KNC elected

Rev. D. Nyanganji, Nkambe East, KNC elected

Foncha Installed Premier as Nkrumah Visits

The 14/12 results in the 1959 elections meant straight away that the Commissioner of the Cameroons according to the letter of the constitution was bound to invite the man who appeared to him to control a majority of members in the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly, and install him Premier. That man was John Ngu Foncha, leader of the KNDP party which had captured 14 seats to 12 of the KNC/KPP alliance.

By sheer coincidence, at this same period, January 1959, even as Mount Cameroon engaged in her periodic eruptions, Southern Cameroons was host to the celebrated Kwarne Nkrumah of Ghana. Mr. Krobo Edusei who was Minister of Works and Transport Ghana, was attached to me as Minister of Works and Transport Southern Cameroons and the other guest ministers were hosted by my colleagues accordingly with Dr. Endeley taking charge of the Osagyefo himself. The Premier's car, CM 7 was used by Dr. Nkrumah until we saw him off at Tiko airport. Dr. Endeley the host and out-going Premier was of course with the distinguished guest in CM 7. When Nkrumah flew off from Tiko airport, KNDP thugs jumped into CM 7 and drove off, leaving Dr. Endeley stranded at Tiko airport. As a matter of fact most drivers to Ministers just drove their cars off to the new KNDP Ministers without any of the formalities of handing over. It all looked more like a mini coup than the orderly transfer of power brought about by the verdict of the ballot box. As we stood there while

CM7 drove off, leaving Dr. Endeley, Premier of Southern Cameroons only days before, stranded at Tiko airport, I could see us heading for a very rough time under Foncha's KNDP Government. Did subsequent events justify our scepticism? That is a question I leave to those who lived through the years of KNDP rule at Buea from 1959 to 1965, to answer. But for the purpose of history and for those who did not experience the KNDP regime at Buea, this I can say; our unhappy experience was such that even total integration and the arrival of the CPDM were considered God-sent.

Premier Foncha's Government – 1959



The Great Debate on Reunification

KNDP capture of the Government of Southern Cameroons, and the installation of Foncha as Premier, projected the question of unification, more than ever to the fore for public debate in the territory. Unification ceased to be a mere slogan intended to catch the “East Cameroonian.”

1 vote; it had now become a positive policy of the KNDP Government at Buea. This position gravely alarmed the KNC/KPP alliance and some KNDP members alike to whom “unification immediate” had represented a most extreme option. The issue therefore attracted a violent storm of public debate. Both within and

outside parliament there was the question of where to be or not to be for Southern Cameroons on Independence Day.

This debate raged from the market place to parliament in Buea, to the constitutional conferences in London, until it reached the recesses of the United Nations. From across the border in then Cameroun under French Trusteeship, the echoes of the UPC, though banned, lingered in people's ears, and encouraged by the hectic rumblings from the West, the issue gained currency and profound interest. For even in this once German colony, the thirst for freedom and independence was gaining momentum, and with this, wider ambitions grew. Visits of important personalities from East Cameroun helped much to add to the flame and urge for unification. Return visits by Southern Cameroons dignitaries of the Government party, where they were treated to lavish receptions, did much to create a sense of an "El Dorado" in their cause.

Against this background, the United Nations was faced with taking an early decision on the future of the territory since both Nigeria and East Cameroun were poised for Independence in 1960. Also, since the voices of Southern Cameroonians lacked unison on the question, it became clear that a United Nation's supervised plebiscite in the territory was one way to ascertain the wishes of the inhabitants on their future. The question needing answer was what precise options or choices to put to the peoples of Southern Cameroons. Her Majesty's Government of Great Britain as Administering Authority, after the necessary consultations, got the matter listed for treatment during the 15th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, in September 1959.

I Visit America

Just when I was wondering how to ever get to the United Nations, by the strangest coincidence, I was awarded a grant by the United States Government under their Foreign Leader Exchange Program, to travel to America for sixty days. The U.S. Government invited both Mr. P.M. Kemcha, Minister of Natural Resources, West Cameroon, and me. So, after the necessary travelling formalities were through, Mr. Kemcha and I left for Washington, United States of America, getting there in the height of the summer of 1959. We were booked into the Fair Fax Hotel, Washington, and despite the surprising heat, we made

ourselves comfortable.

At the Governmental Affairs Institute, we met Mr. John Eldridge Jr., Director, with whom we each discussed our trip, the subjects that interested us and our travelling schedules.

Mr. Kemcha showed interest in activities related to community development and I chose the working of the American Constitution and the governments at the City, the State and at Federal level. To pursue our respective areas of interest, we travelled separately. I travelled to the following places spending an average of four days in each place, where an intensive programme was laid out: New York, Boston, Buffalo, Chicago, Ashland in Illinois, Springfield in Illinois, Mackinaw in Michigan, Chicago Denver, San Francisco, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Miami, Porto Rico, Atlanta, Tuskegee. Before starting off on the cruise, we spent two weeks in Washington itself where visits were arranged to many places of interest - Library of Congress, House of Representatives, Senate Committees, Mount Vernon, Washington Memorial, the National Cemetery, etc.

In each city I visited, the authorities of the State Department or their agents laid out the local programme. In New York Harlem (one of the biggest black communities in the USA), Empire State, the United Nations, etc. were listed. In Buffalo the Niagara Falls; in Springfield New Salem where Abraham Lincoln lived as a boy; also his home in Springfield; in San Francisco its famous bridge; in Los Angeles Hollywood, and Disneyland; in New Orleans the great Mississippi and the Sugarcane plantations; in Atlanta black progress and organisation; in Miami the roaring tourist business; in Porto Rico Tourism and Hotels, also Rural Development (Operation Bootstrap); in Tuskegee Black Education; in Montgomery Alabama Black Resistance (I visited the office of Martin Luther King, but he had gone on holiday to Hawaii); in Chicago I met Louis Armstrong, the king of Jazz; and again in Harlem N.Y. I met Sugar Ray Robinson, the boxer. A great country seen in sixty days was hardly enough. Washington gave me another thirty days, so I went to Porto Rico a second time, to Atlanta and Tuskegee and then flew in to New York where I filed a petition on the Southern Cameroons future before the 4th Committee of the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations.

In my tour round the United States, it could not be all work and no play. While the early part of the days were taken up with serious interviews, meetings, discussion and visits, the afternoons and

particularly the evenings were less crowded. This gave me room for lighter engagements, and to honour private invitations. Also, in most afternoons and evenings where there were no officially fixed appointments, I broke loose into the black neighbourhoods and mixed into the coloured crowd. From this, I gathered a great deal that might never have come my way otherwise. As a black African what would have been the optimum benefit drawn from my travels in the United States of America if all I saw was what the State Department had approved for me to see. In fairness to my sponsors though, I was free to go anywhere I chose, and my entire programme was dictated by me. There is no doubt that they were anxious to give me a good impression and they gave me fair advice during my choice of where to go. For instance when I expressed the wish to visit Little Rock in order to meet the notorious Governor Faubus, Mr. Eldridge, Director of Governmental Affairs Institute, Washington D.C. quietly counselled against my going there because he feared that I may get there only to find the Governor away or otherwise too engaged to find time for me. The final choice was however left to me, but I saw the truth, and sincerity in Mr. Eldridge's advice.

There is no doubt that as every good host is inclined to do, the State Department desired to see me enjoy my visit and could not encourage my bumping into places where I might have run into trouble. Yet at no time did I experience any attempt to impose on me anything that did not meet my approval and my unbridled consent. I was an adult and fully appreciated the purpose of my visit. I did not go to America only to see the dark corners of that vast country, as if such corners did not exist in my own country. An invited guest who only finds delight in peering into the dark spots that may embarrass his host violates the sacred sanctity of human hospitality. Who was I to expect the problems of America to disappear because I had set foot on the New World? Yes, no doubt, I saw a few ugly sights in America; like when I was refused a cab at Atlanta International Airport because all the six taxis waiting there were for whites only.

Yes, I took in that experience as just part of those things that I had come to see in great America. One or two unpleasant experiences could not wipe out the great moments that I enjoyed - like when I met Louis Armstrong the King of Jazz; when I addressed some ten thousand listeners in Mackinaw Island in Michigan and an almost equal number later in Los Angeles and received a standing ovation on

“Political Progress in Africa”; when I addressed a meeting of the Urban League in Denver, and another meeting of the N.A.A.C.P. in Atlanta; when I was made an Honorary Citizen of New Orleans and when I spoke after Sunday service to a congregation in Tuskegee on “Political Progress in Africa” and was profoundly appreciated; also when I met the woman Mayor of San Juan in Porto Rico and was honoured, as a distinguished guest to this Caribbean Island.

Yes I had these happy moments and a few bumps as well during my ninety days in America as guest of the State Department. All made my visit complete and meaningful; the rough and the smooth. To me that is what life should be; that is what makes a genuine picture of a place or anything human. I came away the richer by seeing both sides of the American coin. As a matter of fact, when I found that the going was too smooth up to the time I got to Denver, I complained to the local State Department officials about this and suggested to them to exchange the Grand Canyon in Arizona on my programme with a place in the deep South where I could feel some turbulence for a change in my otherwise too smooth a trip. I did not embark on this visit only to enjoy a flawless jolly ride. I wanted to feel some rough waves as well, in order to taste both sides of my adventure. We got New Orleans into my programme to replace the Grand Canyon, and I ended up being made an Honorary Citizen of that city and received the keys of New Orleans.

I also met great dignitaries and made good friends. In Washington I met a leading Senator. He turned out later in November 1959, to be the Democratic Presidential Candidate and later President John F. Kennedy. I, accompanied by Mr. John Eldridge Jr., had one hour with him in his office in Washington. In Chicago I met Alderman Campbell, one of the only three blacks in the city Council, and one night somewhere just outside Chicago in Highland Park I met Satchmo the Great through Alderman Campbell's arrangement. In Ashland Illinois I met and lived in the home of Dr. Elmer Beadles and his amiable wife Midge. We are still in touch. In Denver, I met a couple, Mary and Donald Hoagland, from whom I received a most invaluable parting gift. “The Germans in the Cameroons.” It is one of my most valued collections. I have lost my contacts in Los Angeles, but cannot forget my visits to Hollywood and to Disneyland. In New Orleans I met the Massalis family who owned the Massalis Mansions, (a motel) and in the evenings I went out with young Marsalis (about my age) to listen to his

Jazz Numbers on the piano.

Atlanta brought me into contact with Chief Aikens, proprietor of the Wulahaja Apartments where I lodged. Chief Aikens, a rare black was in the Housing Estate Business and wielded great influence in high circles. When I reported to him that I had been refused a ride in a cab at the airport because the taxis available were only for “whites,” Chief Aikens picked up his telephone and called the Mayor of Atlanta to query. The way he spoke to the Mayor convinced me that Chief Aikens was no small fry in Atlanta.



Meeting the Great SACHMO at Highland Park off Chicago, I was guest to the King of Jazz, Louis Armstrong. He was starring that summer night, 1959, in a white neighbourhood.

Although I have lost my contacts in New York, I shared the black feel in immense Harlem where I spent many evenings. It was like home, the faces and the music, and you can't miss the feel of Harlem as the spiritual centre of the blacks in America. One night I stopped a cab at the Commodore Hotel on 42nd Street Manhattan and indicated I was bound for Harlem. The driver, a white, looked at me and asked, “Are you one of the delegates at the United Nations?” I answered “Yes” and he opened his door for me. As we drove along, I asked him why he had asked me that question. He answered that had I been a local black wishing to ride to Harlem with him at 10 p.m. in the night, he would not have risked it. He had been held up in Harlem thrice within the past six months and all his money seized. When I dropped off near the Apollo Theatre, I left a sizeable tip to the driver on top of

the fare, in order to provide him with a happier experience than his unlucky past, and in the silent hope to atone for the wrongs of some fellow blacks. How often must we answer for the wrongs of others especially in racially charged circumstances.

While in New York, I was invited to a reception of some Kenyan students who were part of Tom Mboya's 150 scholarships granted to Kenya by various organisations in the United States. The reception was in a church and this reminded me of my Tuskegee experience. The Kenyan youths, many of them looking grown up and mature, were conscious of the opportunity provided them by the grants, and in their speeches they made no secret of their intention of learning seriously whatever America had to offer them. In the final analysis however, they were Kenyan and would stand or fall by the principles which had guided their people and their leaders. Many of those youths who landed in the USA in the summer of 1959, must be playing a great role in the running of the affairs of Kenya today. Though dead and gone, Tom Mboya lives forever as the light that fired the youths of Kenya to the great heights and glories of that African country.

We all returned to the Cameroons from the United Nations by September 1959, clear in our minds for the first time, on the precise question upon which our choice of future hinged. Each group began working on its programme for the campaign in the territory. The British Government as well as the United Nations began setting up the necessary machinery for the proposed plebiscite. The UNO sent out a large number of officials to assist explain to the population the exact meaning of the two choices. The British Government on its part did all within its charge including bringing in the famous Grenadier Guards, to police the territory at the time. All parties bent their energies towards answering the question that was to decide the fate of the one million people of Southern Cameroons, for maybe a thousand years.

It is relevant to record what we found to be the reaction of the population in all these goings on. Many of the tribesmen that constitute the population of Southern Cameroons listened little to what these UNO representatives said; some politicians did not tell their followers the truth. As a matter of fact, they tended to discourage many of them from listening to the United Nations officials. The hard fact was that unification especially at the time of the UPC unrest was so unpalatable that its advocates dared not tell the average Southern Cameroonians that we were heading full blast for it as a choice. It is on

this dread for unification that the proNigerian politicians partly banked their success in the plebiscite. For we believed that Southern Cameroonians being so scared of unification would only choose its alternative. To the bulk of the voters sadly, however, their only understanding was that Foncha and Endeley were each fighting to be ruler at Buea, and no matter how it was put, their only understanding was a choice between Endeley and Foncha. Foncha to them stood for the supremacy of the "Grassfield people," Endeley symbolised that of the "Forest people." They each represented the contending authority to replace the British who were going away, although it is still difficult to explain the role of the Banyang and particularly the Ejagham people of Manyu, who in fact have great affinity with their kith and kin in Nigeria. So, instead of the people choosing their own future in the plebiscite, the effect of which would be a matter of ages, they were choosing between politicians whose influence and power could at most last only their lifetime.

There were of course those who realised what we were actually choosing, but frankly these were the intelligent ones in the midst of our tribal compartments. For the purpose of historical records, we must admit that tribal following greatly influenced and may continue to influence the course of politics in Cameroon and the broader African society for a long time. Men, however brilliant, who had the misfortune of being born from tribal minorities may live and die unnoticed even if they were endowed with the best of talent and ideas. It is until the day arrives when the parochialism of tribal loyalty gives way to true and pure nationalism, and when Cameroonians shall see value and talent no matter from what tribal stock it springs, that ideas would be worth their meaning to them. As it stood, most Southern Cameroonians voted either for the green box or the white one more from what their tribal leaders said, than from their pure understanding of the question. This greatly underlines the sacred duty in those who are destined at each time to lead and speak for the silent masses of our tribal folk.

As Petitioner at the United Nations

Meanwhile, I filed a petition to the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations in September 1959, and I indicated as required by the rules that I would be following up my written petition with oral

evidence. So the authorities granted me oral hearing which lasted for three days (10 a.m. on a Wednesday to Friday afternoon).

On the other side of the Trusteeship Council's Fourth Committee was the delegation of Her Majesty's Government of Great Britain amongst whom were three fellow Cameroonians: Mr. J.N. Foncha, Mr. S.T. Muna and Dr. E.M.L. Endeley. This arrangement was to enable both points of view from Southern Cameroons to be heard, and along with this, my arrival at the United Nations as petitioner indeed greatly facilitated the understanding of our Cameroon case. The British Government, as the Administering Authority, presented their point of view as contained in the statement by the Secretary of State for the Colonies on the matter since 1957, and we the Cameroonians presented our respective stands, one in favour of our attaining independence through continued association with the Federation of Nigeria, and the other by attaining Independence through joining the independent Republic of Cameroun. I do not wish to concern myself with a little quibble of the KNDP of continued Trusteeship, which was rejected.

After the quibbling was cleared, the Trusteeship Council found little difficulty in reaching the crucial question to be put to the people of Southern Cameroons; *Do you wish Southern Cameroons to attain Independence through continued association with the Federation of Nigeria or by joining the Republic of Cameroun?* This allowed no ambiguity; it was a straight choice for the people – the Federation of Nigeria or the Republic of Cameroun. The United Nations thus decided that a plebiscite be conducted in the territory by the Administering Authority under the supervision of the United Nations Organisation, to ascertain the wishes of its inhabitants on their future, and so, the final battle line was drawn on the great debate.



At Tiko Airport in 1959. Hon Mbile amongst political colleagues, who came to welcome him from the United Nations, which had decided on the two plebiscite questions (left to right) Hon. N.N. Mbile, Hon Ajebe Sone, Mr Achan-de Bohn, Rev. Ando She, Mr N.M Bebe, Hon. V.T. Lainjo.

That “Famous” Letter

Some time early in 1960, Prime Minister J.N. Foncha came to the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly one morning and announced that he had at last caught the Opposition’s plan to sell Cameroon to Nigeria. Members listened with rapt attention to the Prime Minister as he spoke and was brandishing some document in his hand as the “letter”.

As he charged the Opposition with having been discovered at last in their sinister design against Cameroon, members of the Opposition heckled and shouted “tender the letter to the House!” Mr. Foncha surprisingly ignored the call from the Opposition to tender the so-called “letter” as a paper before the House. Emboldened by his clear unwillingness to tender the document he was talking about we of the

Opposition challenged Prime Minister Foncha repeatedly to tender the document. He failed to do so, and members took the floor especially from the. Opposition benches to demand that the document be tendered to the House, so that the allegations of the Prime Minister could be verified. Since he was unwilling to tender the document he held in his hand and was actually brandishing it. to the full view of members, it was obviously strange why he the Prime Minister was denying members the right to read the document. This would have enabled them see .the truth or otherwise in the allegations and be in a better position to form a judgement.

In the circumstance, the Opposition called the Prime Minister an alarmist who was calling “wolf” when he was perhaps only seeing a simple dog. All challenges from the Opposition however did not move Mr. Foncha into releasing the document to members to read for themselves. The alarm therefore fizzled out as one of those outbursts of the “king” who was fond of raising false alarms, but fell asleep when the enemy actually struck. This of course could not satisfy the Opposition and we set to work to obtain a copy for what it was worth, of Mr. Foncha’s famous letter.

We finally found it. This was a letter written by Mr. R.J.K. Dibonge to Dr. Endeley, from Lagos where he was attending a Board Meeting. It contained certain information gathered while he met certain Nigerian personalities, and discussed our Southern Cameroons and the plebiscite problem with them. Indeed the letter contained a number of ideas and thoughts of Mr. Dibonge and the men he met. None of these ideas could of course be interpreted by any sensible person as selling Cameroon to Nigeria, a phrase the KNDP always used to carry away the sentiment of the unwary, gullible folk unused to the bare faced lies of politicised demagogues to whom Nigeria was a far away country trying to buy Cameroon. What was actually the position was that Southern Cameroons had been part of Nigeria from 1916, but while Nigeria attained her independence in 1960, the Southern Cameroons part was yet to decide its own future through a UNO organised plebiscite on February 11, 1961.

In the campaign by the two contending parties of KNDP on one hand and the KNC/KPP alliance on the other, each was free to seek support from its friends. The KNDP for instance openly obtained support in money and in propaganda material from French Cameroun and when it became independent, from the Republic of Cameroun

itself. President Ahidjo actually once came to Kumba and addressed a meeting at Hausa Quarters, while I was addressing another rally in Kumba Town at the same time. As for financial and material support, the KNDP made no secret of the huge sums of money from the government of Cameroun and from individuals like Soppo Priso, etc. As a matter of fact, close to the plebiscite day, the KNDP arranged with their friends across the Mungo to bring a number of bulldozers and caterpillars to parade up and down the streets of Kumba Town, to show the populace some of the machines that stood ready to open roads everywhere in the territory, if Southern Cameroons opted for the Republic.

It was therefore nothing out of place if on the Nigerian side there were people who felt that we who favoured that option ought to have sought assistance to support our case. What surprised many people at Foncha's alarm, especially after we received Mr. Dibonge's letter on what Foncha was howling about, is that he could give such a distorted interpretation of mere suggestions and opinions which had not even yet reached the KNC/KPP Alliance leaders at Buea.

For people who were daily in Yaounde, Douala, Bafoussam or Fombran to collect aid in cash and kind, to have raised such alarm on no basis acceptable to intelligent opinion, regarding our legitimate right to obtain support from Nigerian friends, the KNDP leaders displayed an astonishingly low sense of judgement and fair play in this alarm of Prime Minister Foncha. They stand even more condemned when it finally surfaced that the document Foncha was howling over in Parliament was Hon. Motomby's copy of Mr. Dibonge's letter addressed to his party colleagues, from Lagos where he had been attending a Board meeting. Sam Mofor had stealthily lifted the document from Motomby's table at a lunch to which he, Mofor, had been invited by Motomby- Woleta.

The document speaks for itself not only as mere opinions and thoughts of the writer and persons he met, but fully blames the KNC/KPP leaders for not asking for assistance from Nigeria in a plebiscite in which the KNDP leaders received enormous assistance in money and material for their pockets and for the KNDP party from all types of well wishers and supporters east of the Mungo. The famous "letter" brandished by Foncha is published below:

R.J.K. Dibonge,

C/O Secretary, Nigerian Produce Marketing Company Ltd., Constanza House, 72 Campbell Street, Lagos. 28th February, 1960

You will have by now received my letter per P.E.N. As I have indicated in that letter, I had a frank and cordial talk with Chief Festus Ekotie-Eboh at the Federal Ministry of Finance this morning. Our discussions lasted for over 45 minutes and touched on all aspects of the political problems and difficulties now facing us in the Southern Cameroons. I must say at once that Chief Festus was kindness itself to me and he has, to my mind, shown unalloyed sympathy in, and a clear understanding of the terrible situation in which our territory now finds itself. He gave me the assurance that they, Nigerian political leaders are ever ready and willing to render us such assistance (financial, propaganda material, etc.) as lay in their power, but that we in the Southern Cameroons have, for some inexplicable reasons, not called up on them for any assistance: He asked me to depend on his assurance, and enquired as to our precise requirements. I said I felt some diffidence in naming them, but on being pressed I said that in my opinion we needed three important things, namely:

a) Propaganda vehicles

b) Funds

c) A team of propaganda experts to reinforce our own propagandists in relation to the forthcoming plebiscite. I pointed out that our political opponents, the KNDP, have had similar assistance from political leaders in what is now the Cameroon Republic.

As to (a), I suggested 12 land rovers or trucks; as to (b), £10,000 as a start; as to (c), such number of propaganda experts as they could reasonably spare to cover the six administrative divisions in the Southern Cameroons. Chief Festus gave it as his personal opinion that the requirements I have suggested were very modest and reasonable and could easily be met. He suggested, however that it would be a very good thing if a combined delegation comprising some of the leaders of the K.N.C./KPP Alliance would arrange to meet not only Dr. Azikiwe but also the Sarduana of Sokoto before May this year and make detailed representation to them. Chief Festus promised to pave the way for our delegation by making immediate mention of my interview with him to both Dr. Azikiwe and Sir Ahmadu Bello. But Chief Festus went on to blame the hierarchy of the KNC/KPP Alliance for their obvious reluctance to make proper and earlier approach to them. Chief Festus said that from reliable information received by them, it would appear that we are seeking assistance outside Nigeria. They have been informed that one of our leaders has been in contact with Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. I

replied that such a suggestion was rather far-fetched, for I happened to know it as a fact that all leaders of the KNC/KPP Alliance were 100% for the continued association of the Southern Cameroons with the Federation of Nigeria. In any case, I said that we, too, have received information that Dr. Kwame Nkrumah was hobnobbing with our political opponents and thus it was unbelievable that any of us could have any dealings with Dr. Nkrumah. Further, we in the Southern Cameroons know that Dr. Nkrumah has, in his bid for political leadership of Africa South of the Sahara, planted all over the neighbouring territories for the purpose of helping him to achieve his ambition. Chief Festus assured me that the Nigerian troops now patrolling the frontier in the Cameroons would not be withdrawn at the behest of Dr. Felix Moumie.

I have also seen a top-ranking member of the Action Group: we discussed at some length the political situation in the Cameroons as a whole. This gentleman also assured me that his party is willing to assist us, but our leaders have not played fair to them in the past: his party has done all it could to help us to gain national self-determination, but as soon as we achieved this we turned a cold shoulder to them. Nevertheless he is arranging for me to meet Chief Awolowo on Thursday, March 3rd for personal discussions.

Meanwhile, may I advise Messrs. N.N. Mbile, Peter Motomby-Woleta and yourself to endeavour to act now as a formidable team, have complete confidence in each other and put aside whatever personal differences or misunderstandings you might have been harbouring for the sake of the best interest of the Cameroons people. For God's sake, think of our compatriots who have reposed complete confidence in you that you will see them through their present difficulties. Be up and doing, please! Our apparent inaction is causing great anxiety to our friends and well-wishers inside and outside the Southern Cameroons, believe me.

I emphasise again the extreme urgency of your arranging to meet Nigerian political leaders. On second thought, I think it would be advisable, in order to ensure the secrecy of your mission, that our delegation should comprise Mr. N.N. Mbile and yourself only, and not so many people as originally proposed.

I have copied this letter to Messrs. Mbile and Motomby-Woleta.

Very Yours Sincerely, (sgd) Jacob K. Dibonge.

Green Box and White Box

To suit a largely illiterate electorate it was agreed to choose two striking symbols to represent the two contending points of view. We finally settled on using colours that could not be confused, GREEN for association with Nigeria; WHITE for unification with the Republic of Cameroun. The two boxes were painted green or white, with a slot at the top for placing the vote. The vote itself was a piece of firm paper with the question printed on it *“Do you wish Southern Cameroons to attain independence through continued association with the Federation of Nigeria, or by joining the Republic of Cameroun?”* So when a registered voter came forward he/she received the ballot paper with the question on it, and in the privacy of the booth where the two boxes were conspicuously mounted, he/she made his/her choice by inserting the ballot paper into the chosen box through the slot at the top.

All over the territory each Division set up the necessary arrangements to ensure that all men and women of at least twenty-one years of age from every town, village or hamlet were within walking distance to the polling station. To be entitled to vote, one had first to be a native of Southern Cameroons or be one of whose parents were born in the territory. The KNDP Government got in a controversial qualification for French Cameroonians who had resided in the British territory for ten years. There was an intensive period of educating the population on the entire affair; why, how, when to vote. Meetings were held all over the territory by all parties for this purpose. The meetings were not always peaceful, and crowds were sometimes rowdy and unwilling to listen. This was especially so when the listeners were being addressed by those from the opposite camp.

CPNC Born

In June 1960, a convention of KNC (Dr. Endeley's party) and KPP (Mr. Mbile's party) was held in Mamfe. The purpose of the conference was to examine the possibility of forming a single political party out of

these two groups that had been working as allies since 1958. There was no doubt that by working as two distinct groups, the old wounds and suspicions still lingered and often became obstacles to our success. The ideology between the two parties was now identical, and so their continued existence as two separate entities was clearly anachronistic. Gravely demanded by the challenge we now faced, our coming together had become soundly overdue. The KNC and KPP delegates at this Mamfe conference therefore had little difficulty in reaching accord to come together under one party.

To obtain a single name for KNC and KPP, we juggled letters as follows – K (of German version) common to both was altered to C (English version). P was picked from KPP and N from KNC. We now had C.P.N., and adding C in memory of the historic Mamfe Convention that ‘brought us together, we had our CPNC (Cameroon People’s National Convention). In the midst of war a convention rather than a conference was the more appropriate term for the historic Mamfe get-together. For officers, we came out with Dr. E.M.L. Endeley, President; N.N. Mbile, Vice President; P.N. Motomby-Woleta, General Secretary; F.N. Ajebe-Sone, Assistant General Secretary; S.A. Arrey, Treasurer. Mr. P.M. Kale had left the KPP since early 1959, in circumstances that we chose to keep secret at the time. Mr. Kale had then joined the KNDP and I became leader of the KPP since 1959, and Deputy Leader of the CPNC when we came together. Destiny and fate had at last brought me and my comrade Motomby-Woleta side by side to work with our one time arch adversary, Dr. Endeley. This was in obedience to man’s sacred law that principles transcend personalities.

So the advocates of “association with Nigeria” fought the plebiscite as a team and it seems to me that our fortunes would have been worse, had we not taken the historic step of launching the CPNC. This is the more so as the odds were heavily against us the pro-Nigerians in the conflict. First was the fact that the KNDP were in Government at Buea. Then came in consequence, the overwhelming support the unificationists received in the Republic of Cameroun from official as well as private sources. One of course should not underrate the sentiment that the name Cameroun carried whether spelt with “oon” or “oun.” On the pro-Nigerian side while Nigerians naturally wished that Southern Cameroons remained in the Federation, they were not over enthusiastic about the idea. In contrast, the almost

fanatic support enjoyed by the unificationists from the Cameroun Republic was poorly matched by the attitude of most Nigerians towards us the pro-Nigerian advocates. Due partly to their internal political squabbles, many Nigerians were 'indifferent; the NPC were more concerned with the fate of the parts of Cameroon that had been administered under Kaduna; the Action Group showed no interest since the Cameroons had always been regarded as NCNC territory. This left us with only the vocal support of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons, a junior partner in the Central Government in Lagos. Against this position, it goes to the eternal credit of Alhaji Tafawa Balewa, head of the Central Government of Nigeria, that he personally flew to Southern Cameroons in 1960 to make his historic speech in Victoria where he assured Southern Cameroonians of a great future and a secure place for them in the Federation of Nigeria, if they chose that option.

Thirteen: Thirteen

The year 1960, saw, quite a few dramatic events in Southern Cameroons politics deserving mention. One such was the crossing of Mr. J.M. Boja from the KNDP to the CPNC in the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly. Mr. Boja had won his seat on the KNDP bench in one of the constituencies in Wum Division, but after listening to the voices of spokesmen of the CPNC especially on the floor of the House of Assembly, Hon. Boja, one morning, rose in his seat and announced that he had resigned his membership of the KNDP and declared for the CPNC. The crossing of carpet by Hon. Boja caused not a little stir in the political balance in the House of Assembly as the numbers now stood at 13:13, between the KNDP and the CPNC opposition as far as the elected members stood. An equality in numbers between Government and Opposition in any democracy would have had grave repercussions, but the KNDP held on to power. The point was however conceded even by the CPNC that an incumbent champion who fights a draw does not lose his title to the challenger. Perhaps the KNDP had the legal right to cling to power until they could lose a working majority in parliament.



The CPNC Thirteen when Boja crossed. Front row (left to right): Rev. J.C. Kangsen, J.N. Nasako, Dr Endeley, J.M. Boja, N.N. Mbile, Rev. Nyanganyi, S.N. Tamfu. Back row (left to right): S.E. Ncha, J.N. Nsame, V.T. Lainjo, Motomby-Woleta, F.N. Ajebe Sone, Rev. Ando Seh.

The Frambo Episode

The elections of 1959 had brought out the precarious results of 14:12, and with Boja's defection to the CPNC in 1960, the numbers now stood at 13: 13 in the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly. This left one psychological problem daily on our minds, namely that the KNDP Government could after all, fall any time. The pursuit became more tempting now that Boja had led the way to show that even Southern Cameroons politicians could be men of conviction not to be tied to an. unpopular bandwagon for ever against their will. The Boja crossing indeed had a dual effect. The opposition felt more challenged to address the possibility of the fall of the KNDP Government and change history. The Government party members saw for the first time that a man could break the chains of political bondage and make for freedom. Thus - was set the background for the Frambo episode that rocked the Southern Cameroons for a good while in 1960.

Frambo, a village farmer from Tali, Bayang in now Manyu Division, had won his seat in the 1959 elections on the KNDP ticket.

He was one of those who sat in the KNDP back bench in parliament and served the purpose of keeping the KNDP number of 13 from growing less.

When the CPNC received feelers on his intent to cross the carpet, contacts established that Frambo had no desire to continue supporting the cause of the KNDP, but was enslaved to that party only because he owed them huge sums of money in election debts and the cost of a Land Rover. His indebtedness to the KNDP was in the region of two thousand pounds and this was the price he demanded from the CPNC with which to regain his freedom.

On or about the 8th of May, 1960, a high powered KNC/KPP alliance delegation (Dr. Endeley, Mr. Mbile and Mr. Fokum) travelled to Tali to complete negotiations with Mr. Frambo and representatives of his village. His problem was met by the payment to him of the two thousand pounds he needed. As evidence of his decision to leave the KNDP fold and embrace the KNC/KPP alliance, he handed to their envoys, a letter duly signed by him and addressed to the Commissioner of the Cameroons in which he announced his resignation from the KNDP party. Rather than stand by his word, Frambo changed his mind and then issued a second letter the next day. See Frambo's letters A and B.

Frambo's letters (A)

Tali Town Mamfe Division, S. Cameroons 7th May, 1960.

*The Commissioner of the Cameroons, Buea,
The Speaker Southern Cameroons House of Assembly, Buea, Mr. J.N
Foncha, Leader KNDP, Buea,*

Dr. E.M.L. Endeley, Leader KNC/KPP alliance, Buea.

Resignation from the KNDP: D.M Frambo, M.H.A.

L Dickson Mbi Frambo, member of the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly for Mamfe South, do hereby solemnly declare that I have decided to resign my membership of the KNDP (Kamerun National Democratic Party) under the leadership of Mr. J.N Foncha, and have declared that I shall henceforth become a member of the KNC/KPP parties under the leadership of Dr. E.M.L. Endeley.

Consequently, I shall henceforth belong in the Southern Cameroons House of

Assembly to the KNC/KPP alliance parties and subject to their whip.

I take this stand because I disagree with the policy of Mr. Foncha's KNDP to unify the Southern Cameroons with the Republic of Cameroun, and my electorate for the same reason have requested me to cross the carpet and belong to the party that pursues a policy calculated to retain the Southern Cameroons within the British Commonwealth of Nations.

This statement supersedes any document bearing my signature and deposited with my former party the KNDP, in which undated resignations from the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly were demanded from all the elected members of the KNDP, as a precaution to prevent any of us from using our conscience in resigning from the KNDP without risking the loss of one's seat in parliament. I wish to state categorically that I had no intention whatsoever to resign from the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly and was made to sign that document under duress.

*I beg to remain, Sir,
Faithfully Yours,*

D.M Frambo, M.H.A cc: The Nigerian Press, The Nigerian Broadcasting Service, Lagos.

Frambo's letter (B)
Tali Mamfe 9/5/60.

"The Ag. Commissioner of the Cameroons, Buea.

Sir,

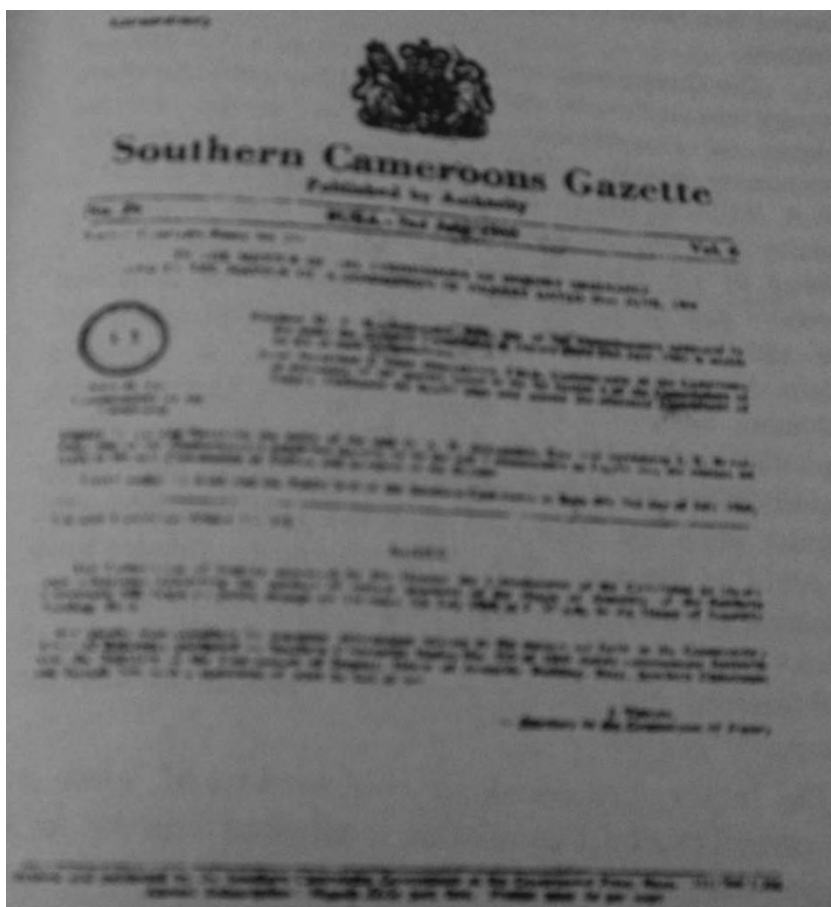
You might have been given a letter of resignation by one of the KNC/KPP leaders said to have been my resignation from my party the KNDP. I want to inform you that I have no intention to resign from the KNDP but merely signed under force of arms a printed letter presented to me at midnight on Sunday the 8th by Dr. E.M.L. Endeley and Mr. NN Mbile.

I have since reported this incidence to the police and statements have been recorded from me about it.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient Servant, (Sgd) D.M. Frambo.

cc: to, Hon. J.N. Foncha. Premier of the S. Cameroons N.B.C. Buea."



That day, Frambo was to travel to Buea to present his resignation, but instead went to the police in Mamfe and complained that Dr. Endeley and Mr. Mbile had come to his village, held a gun at him and compelled him to resign from his party the KNDP. Upon this complaint, the Southern Cameroons Government appointed a Judicial Commission of Inquiry presided over by one Mr. J.E. Burke, a West Indian lawyer then based in Nigeria, to enquire into the story of Mr. Frambo.

The Commission took on the form of a full Judicial Inquiry into the Frambo story. The Legal Secretary, Southern Cameroons Government, Mr. Robson served as the prosecuting attorney, while five distinguished lawyers, Mr. F.R.A. Williams, Mr. Arthur Prest, Mr. Aderemi, Mr. S.M.L. Endeley and Mr. Thompson of London, were

counsel in defence of Dr. Endeley and Mr. Mbile. At the Inquiry, Frambo's gun story was torn into shreds by the facts that were adduced before the Commission. Frambo could not explain how in his own village of over a thousand inhabitants, three men with a gun compelled him to sign a resignation against his will without his raising any alarm, especially after one of them remained and slept in the village for hours when 'the other two with the gun had departed. How could he and some five of his village confidants have entertained, as he said, the remaining one man, Mr. Mbile, to a "drinks party" if Mr. Mbile and his two colleagues had truly threatened him with a gun only minutes before the "drinks party" began.

The Inquiry proceeded for two weeks and when its Report came out, the Commission castigated Frambo as a shameless liar who after striking a deal which the KNC/KPP alliance men entered in good faith, he turned coat and treacherously came out with his false gun story. Dr. Endeley and Mr. Mbile were fully cleared by the Commission. After the Inquiry, Dr. Endeley took action in the Southern Cameroons High Court Buea, against Frambo for defamation and got judgement against him for one thousand pounds. It is reported that his party gave him the money to pay the court award since Frambo was a man of straw. On my part it was advised that I drop my intention to file a similar claim against Frambo, as it would have sounded like kicking a dead horse.

We do not know what history we would be writing today had Frambo been sincere. From the example of the KNDP formed by Foncha and Jua who left from the KNC, we are witnesses of how the course of the history of Southern Cameroons has been influenced since 1955.

Had Frambo been a man indeed,
To match his word with what he did,
Who knows what fate would have today,
Been ours to guide our nations way.

The coward and the poor in sight,
Bereft of heart nor will to fight,
All doomed to share such sorry plight,
Are men not meant for lofty heights.

Dave Frambo's role was not to be,

The star and hero of a comedy,
He lost his chance amongst the great,
He failed to ride the storm of fate.
To strike a bargain, seal a deal,
When sure as death he meant to steal,
Leaves him a villain in our sight,
Indeed not meant for lofty heights.

Second Thoughts

By late 1960, the plebiscite campaign was on, in full swing. The UNO officials, the British Government, administrative men, the political groups, all moved forward and backward criss-crossing the territory as many times as the need arose to put over to the people the significance of the great questions. As February 11, 1961 drew near, the tempo of the campaign rose and both sides felt the uncertainties of that decisive day. There were second thoughts. Where were we going, many asked?

In the midst of all the bitterness and distractions, were the common people really getting the message? Were it not better that this bitterness ebbed somewhat before we took the historic plunge? On both sides of the political divide, tongues were wagging for second thoughts. Men like P.M. Kale, A.N. Jua and Motomby-Woleta deserve to go on record as strong advocates of these second thoughts. From whispers, the question came out, 'why don't we cancel the questions billed for February 11, and decide our fate later perhaps in a cooler atmosphere?' It was clear to both sides that the population was too strongly divided to ensure a balanced judgement on February 11th.

Discussions were therefore held and it was agreed that we rethink the whole question, and that the plebiscite be called off for the time being. Both parties agreed to meet Mr. J.O. Field, the Commissioner of the Cameroons on our second thoughts and the Commissioner contacted Colonial Office, London who signalled that the Cameroon leaders could come to London. A quick delegation was arranged:

- Dr. J.N. Foncha, Mr. S.T. Muna, Mr. A.N. Jua, Mr. P.M. Kale (KNDP)
- Dr. E.M.L. Endeley, Mr. S.E. Ncha (CPNC)

- The Commissioner, Mr. J.O. Field
- Some Cameroon Government Officials

At the Elders and Fyffes Club, Likomba, on the day of their take off from Tiko, we held our last meeting of the two groups. We prayed for their safe flight and success in their mission.

In four days they came back. What news? It was disappointing. In London, the KNDP had changed and did not want to suspend the plebiscite any more. Premier Foncha surprised the British by telling them that he had not come with any new thoughts after all; but to demand 14 million pounds from the British Government as a “parting gift” to carry to our brothers over the Mungo as “dowry for the impending marriage.” The British were astonished; the Commissioner of the Cameroons was embarrassed; Kale and Endeley were crest fallen; Jua threatened to resign.

The delegation came back after only four days in London. In Buea, the KNDP virtually faced a crisis as Jua threatened to resign on the issue. The Grassfield mammies in Buea, counter-threatened to strip naked before him if Jua quit, and the Bobe of Kom unable to face the threats of the women piped down and the crisis passed. This last chance was also lost. We had no other option now left but to file out our men on the 11th of February in a battle that events subsequently showed, had no winners, nor losers. This is the honest record for the benefit of history (Foncha is still alive as I write this). It shows how close we were to a third alternative, and yet it was lost. It seems to me that the hand of destiny was resolved to guide us where we are today, for better or for worse.

Plebiscite Day

On the 11th of February, the 331.312 registered voters of Southern Cameroons solemnly filed out to cast their plebiscite vote on behalf of themselves and of their offspring for, may be, a thousand years. Indeed the plebiscite vote was markedly different from the ordinary electoral vote to send representatives to councils or. to parliament, because it doesn't come again. All through the territory from the Atlantic shores of Victoria to the windy highlands of Nkambe, under the burning sun, long lines of men and women waited patiently to cast their votes while

the children looked on. As the hour of 6 o'clock tolled, the gates to the polling- stations were closed to anyone who had not then arrived; but for those already there, no matter their numbers, and no matter the lateness of the hour, they stayed and cast their votes to determine the Cameroon future for themselves and for their posterity for aye.

And now, as we assess this incident in retrospect, it is great to have been alive and to be there to cast a vote for this historic choice. Those who will read of this in the years, decades and centuries to come, will revere that great day for Cameroon when we chose our future. How many people the world over, especially blacks, across history have ever had the right to choose their political future? To many of our race it is the almighty rulers who chose and choose for them. How many of our fellow citizens of this world, especially of this continent have ever exercised the right to choose? Against this contrast, February 11, 1961 was our finest day, for while most African states and their limits were chosen for them by powers they never even saw in far off Berlin in 1984-1885; we, the one million Southern Cameroonians, must thank destiny that we did exercise the sacred right to choose our future on Plebiscite Day.

Results by Number of Votes in the Southern Cameroons Plebiscite

<i>Administrative Divisions and Plebiscite Districts</i>	<i>No. of Votes Nigeria</i>	<i>No. of for</i>
Nkambe Division		
Nkambe North	5.962	1.917
Nkambe East	3.845	5.896
Nkambe Central	5.095	4.288
Nkambe South	7.051	2.921
<i>Total</i>	21.917	15.022
Wum Division:		
Wum North	1.485	7.322
Wum Central	1.644	3.211
Wum East	1.518	13.133
Wum West	2.137	3.449
<i>Total</i>	8.784	27.115
Bamenda Division		
Bamenda North (Nso)	8.073	18.839
Bamenda East (Ndop)	1.842	17.856
Bamenda Central West (Bafut)	1.230	18.027
Bamenda East (Ngemba)	529	18.193
Bamenda West (Menemo, 467	16.142	
Bamenda South (Bali, Nyonga, 220	19.426	
<i>Total</i>	12.341	108.485
Mamfe Division		
Mamfe West	2.039	8.505
Mamfe North	5.432	6.410
Mamfe South	685	8.175
Mamfe East	1.894	10.177
<i>Total</i>	10.070	33.267
Kumba Division		
Kumba North East	9.466	11.991
Kumba North West	14.738	555
Kumba South East	6.105	12.827
Kumba South West	2.424	12.227

	<i>Total</i>	32.733	27.600
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Victoria Division		
Victoria South West	2.552	3.756
Victoria South East	1.329	4.870
Victoria North West	4.744	4.205
Victoria North East	3.291	9.251
<i>Total</i>	11.916	22.082
Grand Total (Southern Cameroons)	97.741	233.571

Source: Southern Cameroons Press Release No. 1217—Southern Cameroons Plebiscite.

When all the voting was complete, the boxes were sealed and conveyed rapidly to the Divisional centres where counting took place. The figure for each Division was then conveyed to the Office of the Plebiscite Commissioner at Buea who conducted the final count to obtain the results. In view of the distances involved to bring in ballot boxes from the polling stations to the Divisional Centres, it took some time before the Divisional figures reached Buea for the final count to be taken. It showed the following results:

For the white box: 233,571 votes for the green box: 97,741 votes

The breakdown of this is even more interesting. It shows that everywhere in Southern Cameroons, despite whatever circumstances and pressures prevailing, there were elements who held one or the other of the opposing views, as is clearly borne out by the figures. Nkambe and Kumba Divisions registered clear majorities for green, 21.917 to 15.022 and 32.733 to 27.600 respectively, 'while Victoria scored an impressive 11.916 votes for the green box and 22.082 for the white box. Giant Bamenda with 108.485 votes for the white box against 12.341 for the green box swung the pendulum'. All through the length and breath of Southern Cameroons, men and women stoutly stood up to be counted.

It Was Glorious to Be There

So, despite all the war, the bitter words and raging strife,
It was glorious to be there, in the battle of a life.
The plebiscite of sixty-one marked the closing of an age,
Even as it stood aloft, at the opening of a stage.
For a million Cameroonians, be they far or be they near,
Men were mustered out to speak, for maybe a thousand years.
A sacred task they all performed, speaking for their silent heirs,
Where to be or not to be, Donga's banks to Limbe's mere.
So the records of mankind testify to what they say,
Was the verdict of ourselves, and our silent heirs for aye.
Yes,
For those who saw the fight, those who made the sacred choice,
They who shed the loser's tear, or as victors did rejoice,
Man and woman, boy and girl, all did share the nation's care,
All who lived to see that day, it was glorious to be there.

Battle Shifts to the United Nations

When the results of the plebiscite were announced, there was blind rejoicing by some, cautious jubilation by others, but there was a dreadful chill amongst the pro-Nigerian elements. It was the type of silence that accompanies desperation, that precedes an explosion. To the 97.741 men and women who had cast their vote in the green box, it was as if their world had ended.

Had Cameroonians been a more turbulent race, this may have led to some unpleasant violence, or to movement of people as refugees. However Cameroonians displayed an astonishing capacity to resist and absorb the rudest shocks and stood this last endurance test. Though Cameroonians can indeed bear suffering and disappointment, we the leaders of the CPNC did not have an easy job in keeping our men from exploding. What could we do to make them swallow these results? What was in reality the interpretation of the results and what could be done to defuse the desperate tension in CPNC followers resembling a bottled volcano?

The details of how to interpret the plebiscite results had not been defined by the United Nations. After all, the UNO also had its limitations in the matter. Its decisions had to depend' on the will of the people concerned. An ingredient of democracy includes the consent of the governed not only the might of the majority. The UNO as a democratic institution was therefore bound to respect the will of the people in the silent point concerning interpretation of the plebiscite results.

The CPNC, accordingly, put forward its idea of how those results were to be interpreted.

- Since a plebiscite is not elections which are held from time to time so that the electorate always have a chance to correct themselves if they find they had made a mistake,
- Since the Southern Cameroons itself had been created by European powers regardless of the people's views or wishes,
- Since the UNO had the opportunity more than the Berlin

Conference of 1884-1885, to obtain the most authentic opinion and views of the peoples concerned in respect of their future,

The CPNC demanded that in the interpretation of the plebiscite results, the most authentic body to consult in the final analysis was not an artificial creation of the white man (named Cameroon), but the pure ethnic unit as nature created.

In our opinion the tribe or clan constituted that unit, and it must be that unit that the UNO was to use in the final interpretation of the results. If any tribe indicated by majority where it wished to be, there it was to be allowed to go. If the effect of that choice was to last a thousand years, then that ethnic group (nature made) would have chosen its destiny by itself. The CPNC argued that since the errors of 1884-1885 include the fact that ethnic groups were split and placed under different powers against their will, the UNO would be repeating the same errors if it did not use the tribe as the ultimate unit to consult. Especially, bearing in mind age-long animosities between ethnic groups and the fact further that on the Cameroon/Nigeria border several ethnic groups lie on both sides, adjustment of the international boundary would serve to correct the errors of 1884-1885, and would be the best answer to our present dilemma. Convinced that this case of the CPNC deserved the attention of the United Nations Organisation, we gave notice to Britain as the Administering Authority that we were pressing our case of the interpretation of the Plebiscite Results, to the United Nations.

The Last Battle at the UNO (CPNC Delegation April, 1961)

We decided on a big delegation. Each of the main ethnic groups constituting the CPNC backbone was to raise the cost for one delegate to the United Nations, while the CPNC itself was to bear the cost of sending the Leader and Deputy Leader. The Molongo of the Bakweris of Fako Division raised enough money to pay for two men, Mr. E.K. Martin and Mr. S.M.L. Endeley (Barrister). The Mokanya of the Orokos in Kumba Division financed one delegate Chief Sakwe Bokwe of Dikome Balue. At a single meeting held at Bole Bakundu, the Orokos raised two thousand pounds, enough and more to cover the cost of a round trip for Chief Bokwe from Tiko to New York, plus one month of his keep in the city of the sky scrapers. The Muane-

Ngoh of Bakossi were to finance the cost of sending Mr. F.N. Ajebe-Sone, while our strong men of Nkambe paid for the Rev. Ando Seh. The CPNC team that arrived New York to storm the United Nations comprised the following: Dr. E.M.L. Endeley - Leader; Mr. N.N. Mbile - Deputy Leader; Barrister S.M.L. Endeley - Legal Adviser; Mr. E.K. Martin; Chief Sakwe-Bokwe, and Rev. Ando Seh. Premier J.N. Foncha and Mr. S. T. Muna sat with the British Delegation.

From the Cameroun Republic this time, it was the Honourable Charles Okala, Foreign Minister who arrived with a huge delegation from Yaounde. Travelling with celebrities like Dr. Eyidi Bebey on his delegation, Charles Okala made a huge impression in the Trusteeship Council where his case was to oppose the plebiscite results in British Northern Cameroons which had elected to join Nigeria while accepting the results registered at Buea. Mr. Charles Okala, had at one time been addressing the Council from about 10 a.m. until midday when the presiding Chairman tapped his table to announce break for lunch. The Cameroun Foreign Minister then faced the Chairman saying, "Mr. Chairman, I am sorry I have taken a good deal of your time this morning. I wish however to promise that on resumption after break, I will not take so much time. I have only seventeen pages of my speech left." There was a roar of consternation and laughter.

On our part, the CPNC literally stormed the United Nations Trusteeship Council. The delegates addressed the Council in turns. We made such a case that many of the distinguished representatives felt with us. Our point was clear. This was not an election where Southern Cameroonians may have the chance to correct their errors. It was a vote forever, and therefore one too crucial to be decided by a mere majority territory-wide. Southern Cameroons itself being a European creation was still building the spirit of belonging to one territorial community.

We contended that the United Nations itself having been silent on the interpretation of the results, we had come with our point of view on how the interpretation should be. The international boundaries should be adjusted leaving the ethnic units no longer divided, but made to fall together east or west of that line, basing the arrangement on the indications obtained at the results of the plebiscite, as to where each ethnic group wished to go. By this, no ethnic group would remain split, and the groups, as indicated by their majorities, would be deemed to have chosen on behalf of themselves and their heirs where to be. Since

the ethnic group is the purest unit created by nature, the deciding generation would bear responsibility to their heirs for their choice. For days, the CPNC delegation put forward its case to these gentlemen of the United Nations, each leader speaking for his ethnic group, and indicating its choice by the way it had voted.

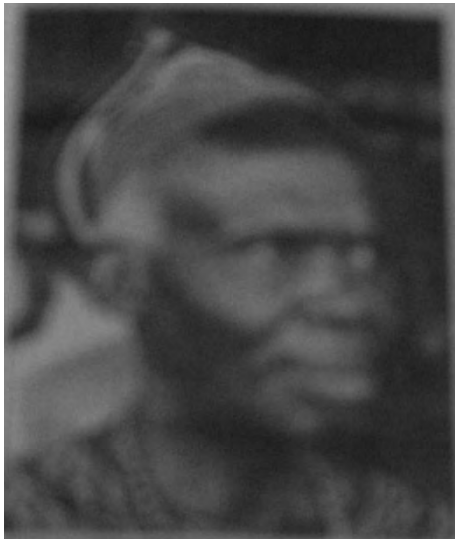
One interesting moment arrived when Chief Sakwe Bokwe was to address the United Nations. The Chief, fully adorned in Oroko traditional dress was to speak in a language in which he could best express himself. He chose to speak in Balue, one of the dialects of the Oroko tribe and I (Mbile) served as the Chiefs interpreter. The Chief himself took the rostrum in the hall, facing the UN representatives and speaking in Balue. I took over the place of the English interpreter in one of the translation boxes provided, and as the chief's speech came over to me through my earphones, I put back the translation in English through the microphone in front of me. The UNO members listening put their ear phones on and switching to the right band heard the full speech of the Chief in all the five official languages of the UN – English, French, Spanish, Russian, Chinese. So in the archives of the United Nations today there is record of a Cameroon natural ruler, Chief Sakwe Bokwe, possibly the only Cameroonian natural ruler ever, who addressed the world assembly in his native tongue (Balue).

We spent the best part of a month in New York, taking our places each time one or the other of us or those related to our case was addressing the UN representatives. The debate was many-sided. At one time, it could be a CPNC delegate speaking or it could be Mr. Ntumazah of the OK or it could be Dr. Eyidi Bebey or the distinguished Foreign Minister Mr. Charles Okala. The British and the French also had their moments. For the British, their stand had been simplified for them. The peoples concerned had themselves spoken; the South for joining the Republic of Cameroun, the North for continued membership of Nigeria through its Northern Region. They, the British as Administering Authority could only endorse the peoples own voice, and signal the end of their stewardship.

The French had it in another fashion. The debate, having dragged on for many days, it came to the time for the closing Resolution. The representative for India Mr. Krishna Menon Jr. had tabled the Resolution in which he called on the United Nations Trusteeship Council to recommend to the General Assembly acceptance of the results of the plebiscite organised in the British Trust Territory of the

Cameroons. The Resolution was stoutly opposed by Foreign Minister Okala of the Cameroun Republic on the ground that North Cameroon was not coming to the Republic, but going to Nigeria. When the Resolution was being voted on, Mr. Okala charged that this was another “Waterloo” organised by the British to rob the Cameroon Republic of part of their due, ordering all Francophone countries present to walk out in protest and not participate in the voting. Even the Republic of France walked out as Okala thundered. It looked like a classic case of the tail wagging the dog. The Resolution was however adopted as follows:

Yes	26
No	6
Abstentions	33



Ndeh Ntumanzah Hard core advocate of unification. Was present at UNO during choice of plebiscite question in 1959 as well as at interpretation of the results in 1961. Founder of OK, an off shoot of UPC.

Many of those 26 representatives who voted for the Resolution were delegates from British Commonwealth Countries who supported the British stand to get done with the Cameroon problem. The

Francophone countries walked out as Charles Okala had commanded. Note the number of abstentions and the six positive “Nos.” This is the record on the Resolution from the Trusteeship Council, recommending to the General Assembly to endorse the Results of the plebiscite of Southern Cameroons in 1961. The General Assembly indeed endorsed the Resolution and the rest was left to the British Administering Authority, to implement the formal handing over of the territory to the Independent Republic of Cameroun.

Cameroonians Listened in New York – Change of Heart?

We, Cameroonians learnt a lot from the more mature diplomats who represented their various countries in the United Nations. For days and weeks, for a tedious month, they patiently listened to the CPNC case which in effect meant further partitioning of the then Southern Cameroons between those in favour of continued association with Nigeria on one hand, and those for unification with the Republic of Cameroun. They noted the sincerity and conviction in our point of view. Many saw the strength in our case, and several refused to record a vote against us. Some positively understood our case to such an extent that they voted accordingly to demonstrate their stand. There were six positive Nos, there were thirty-three abstentions, to the twenty-six Yes, on the Indian sponsored Resolution.

When these distinguished representatives of the UNO began to respond to the case made out by the Cameroonian delegates, they demonstrated clearly their deep appreciation of the problems raised. They also displayed their maturity and grasp of the immediate as well as the long term effect on what ever we did or proposed to do. In particular many of these wise men of the United Nations in large measure held the view that much as there was weight and conviction in the CPNC representations, they held one consensus, that every nation must face its day of beginning. Even if it meant that the Cameroon nation was starting then to commence on the road to true nationhood, it was better to face that, than to embark upon further fragmentation of the territory. They appealed to the Cameroonians who had taken the trouble to travel thus far in order to present their case, that in view of the complex ethnic problem in Cameroon in particular, and Africa in general, further fragmentation of the territory could not be the solution. Coming generations of Cameroonians may look at the

problem differently and may blame the United Nations for fragmenting the Cameroons a third time. In the circumstance, they counselled the leaders of the territory to accept the present results on the basis of Southern Cameroons remaining one entity even, as a beginning to the building of a greater Cameroon nation.

The voice of one Cameroonian delegate Dr. Eyidi Bebey, particularly touched the hearts of most of us, who listened to his 'mature and philosophic discussion of the problem before us. Dr. Eyidi Bebey saw the strength of the argument of each Cameroonian spokesman, but felt that all, Cameroonians should accept our coming together even as a beginning in the building of a great Cameroon nation for our posterity. Unlike others who saw those with differing opinions only as traitors, he stood to condemn no one for the views they sincerely held, but he appealed to all to accept the challenge of unification notwithstanding positions held in the past. Dr. Eyidi Bebey was so thorough in his understanding of the Cameroon problem that even the United Nations had recognised his special knowledge and regarded him an expert on Cameroons affairs. On several occasions, he was invited to New York to assist the UNO understand some intricate special questions on Cameroon. The conciliatory voice of Eyidi Bebey contrasted sharply with the bullying thunder of Charles Okala, and it served to remind the CPNC men that all may not be fire-eating east of the River Mungo.

In their concluding speeches, the UNO representatives appealed to all Cameroonian leaders especially the Southern Cameroonians to try and sink their differences in the process of unification, so as to succeed in the great task ahead. Following this appeal and the moving voice of Eyidi Bebey, a joint meeting was held in one of the Committee rooms of the United Nations between representatives of the KNDP (Foncha and Muna had arrived at the UN) and the CPNC delegation with Mr. E.K. Martin presiding. At this meeting we agreed that, in view of the great task before us to effect unification as smoothly as possible, and in view of the need to maintain a united front in drawing up a constitution for United Cameroon,

1. We declared a truce in the political war, calling on all our members, to refrain from any provocative acts and utterances.

2. We agreed to forget the past and work together towards the achievement of a

happy and prosperous Cameroon nation.

3. We were to return home together, received by our supporters at a joint reception at Tiko airport.

4. There was to be no claim of victory or defeat by any side.

5. On our arrival at Tiko, crowds of both groups were to be told that they had come to receive a united Cameroon team returning.

We Return Together

And so indeed we returned, and at Tiko airport both groups were there with no placards hailing any victory or otherwise. Two speakers, one from each group briefly told the crowds, “We have come back to face the grim future together.” As we got into our cars, to our various homes to take a respite before embarking on the next item of our uncertain programme, our demonstration of unity at Tiko was already a loud signal of the new approach we were beginning to adopt. Thanks to the appeal from the distinguished ambassadors at the United Nations, thanks to the voice of a man like Dr. Eyidi Bebey, we followed this up with a joint open air meeting in the Buea market place where leaders from both parties were present and addressed the people on the new spirit of unity in unification. Those present at the Buea meeting included: Mr. Nangah, Dr. Fonlon, Mr. Ndamukong, Mr. Lafon, Mr. Ekangaki, Mr. Jua, Premier Foncha, Dr. Endeley, Mr. Kemcha, Mr. Mbile, Mrs Difor, Mr. Daiga, Mr. Muna, Mr. Kale, Mr. Efiom, Mr. Ewusi, Mr. Ngale, Mr. Ngunjoh etc. Despite the rain, leaders from both sides spoke to the crowd, Premier Foncha, Dr. Endeley, Mr. Jua among others, and when Dr. Foncha was speaking, I held an umbrella over his head.

Bamenda Consultations June 1961

Pursuant to the post plebiscite spirit of working together for the implementation of unification, Premier Foncha signalled for all parties to converge in Mankon towards the dying days of June 1961, to hold consultations preparatory to the holding of a full Constitutional Conference with representatives from both the Cameroun Republic and Southern Cameroons.

This Mankon meeting was to enable us prepare a rough draft to

indicate the mode of constitution to apply on the unified country. Representation at the meeting covered the KNDP, the CPNC, the One Kamerun, the Chiefs and the N.As. The Attorney General of the Southern Cameroons Government presented memoranda on the various heads of matters for discussion. Premier Foncha led the KNDP delegation assisted by Mr S.T. Muna. The CPNC was represented by Mr. N.N. Mbile (Deputy Leader) and P.N. Motomby-Woleta (General Secretary). OK was represented by Mr. Ndeh Ntumazah and Mr. Albert Mukong. The Chiefs had the Fon of Bali and Chief Oben of Mamfe present, while N.As had representatives as well.

After discussing for a number of days we reached a skeleton of what we wanted, preparatory to the much bigger Foumban Conference pending some weeks ahead. A record of this effort shows distinctly the form of association that Southern Cameroonian leaders had in mind for unified Cameroon, a loose Federal structure of virtually two autonomous states. Measured alongside what we have had in thirty years of union, the original form indicated at Mankon looks hardly recognisable from what we have today. This result can be attributed to a number of factors, significant amongst them being the ever fragmenting tendency of the politicians of Southern Cameroons, and the growing development of the one party idea.



Commissioner J. O. Field says good bye to Cameroon at Bota Wharf from where he sailed home in 1961. Shaking hands with those who saw him off. Left comer, Mrs. Mbile and Husband in the line. Commisioner J.D. Field's departure symbolised the constitutional end of British administration of Southern Cameroons

Chapter Ten

The Foumban Conference and the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Cameroon

We had hardly enough time to wash our travelling clothes from the Bamenda dust after the Mankon meeting, when the gong tolled for the expected East-West Conference to tackle the question of a constitution for the Federal Republic. The venue was announced to be the romantic capital of the historic Bamoums, famed for their valour in war, their love of art, and their beautiful women referred to in local parlance as “the long necks of Foumban.” Our excitement, as we packed our kit for the flight to the city of the great Njoya, was understandable. For at last the time had arrived for us now reasonably united on this purpose in West Cameroon, to tackle the politicians of the East in a Conference that would define our constitutional relation. Here, we would confront the ‘brothers’ across the Mungo in a battle to test our wits and our experience in constitution making. Indeed, against the background of having attended four Constitutional Conferences, three in London and one in Lagos, several of us in the West Cameroon contingent felt confident to be more than a match for our Francophone counterparts. For none of them could claim the experience of no less than four months of debate and lobbying in the corridors and Committee rooms of Lancaster House London, and in Lagos. In men like Endeley, Foncha, Muna, Motomby, Jua, my humble self to name only these, the feeling was that in wrestlers, on hearing the drums and music of their popular sport.

Against our Mankon conference homework, we felt confident and relaxed in our seats as the plane flying Tiko-Koutaba glided northwards in a bright clear sky. The undulating hills and the well-cultivated Bamileke countryside lay below us depicting part of the new territory we had come to join. In the midst of jokes and laughter, we surveyed the ground below, and girded our loins in readiness for what we took to be the gathering battle of Foumban. Our plane touched ground at Koutaba airstrip, some miles from the city, and we were soon whisked off in waiting cars that sped along a well-graded earth road, to the gates of Foumban. Here we met huge welcoming crowds who greeted us with music and song in the midst of the booming of dane guns.

A striking feature at the city gates was the remains of a deep ditch in the form of a dry moat that encircled the entire town since the pre-European days. This ditch served as the last defence line to shield the city from any invaders, and to provide protection for villagers from the surrounding countryside who took refuge in the city in the event of a siege. Reported to have been at one time several metres deep, the moat served to halt any invading force while the defenders waited on the city side and hurled rocks and other missiles at the enemy attempting to break in. The Bamoum archers posted at strategic points on high ground within the enclosure, then made short work of such invaders, and by this the city could withstand a long siege. The ditch around the city encircled enough land from which the besieged dwellers could eke subsistence almost indefinitely.

Foumban itself looked ideal for this historic come together. Free from all the unrest that had scared West Cameroonians and blessed with a most congenial climate and people, the Eastern authorities had picked the place deliberately for the occasion. The entire town had been exquisitely cleaned up and houses splashed with whitewash. Charles Okala, the Foreign Minister, an amiable host unlike the turbulent fire-eater we had seen of him in New York, had flown in two orchestras, one from Yaounde, the other from Douala. Our hosts had taken meticulous care to provide the best lodging possible. Food was good and receptions lavish. As a matter of fact, we could see the weeks of effort put in by our hosts to cement the impression that the term 'brothers' went deeper than on mere lips and the climate in Foumban real or artificial went far to convince us that despite the stories of "murder and fire," there could be at least this island of peace, east of the Mungo. It was a sensible diplomatic stroke by Charles Okala the Foreign Minister who with Jean Bateyene, his Secretary General was indisputably one of the brains behind all these arrangements. It was a Sunday when we flew in from Tiko, and we dined that evening at Hotel Auberge, and as the strains of music from Victor Priso's band filled the cool evening air, we longed for the morning when all this music and dancing would give way to the real object of our mission. For at no time did we lose thought that we were engaged in a most tricky encounter with untested "brothers" who could use music and wine to lure us into complaisance, even as had happened to brave Ulysses of ancient Greek mythology. And this is speaking for the CPNC.

So, on Monday morning July 17 1961, we converged towards a small almost square hall somewhere in the city of the great Njoya who at his height is reported to have fielded an army of as many as twenty thousand foot men, apart from cavalry and archers. The atmosphere everywhere from the moment we landed in Foumban to the hour of our departure was dominated by one major feature, President Ahidjo's presence. The tremendous trappings surrounding the President, the huge entourage of top civil servants, the presidential sounds, the heavy and tight security, the army which had to make its presence felt wherever the head of state was; all added to an atmosphere in Foumban that reduced the actual conference to a diminutive anticlimax. No doubt there was in the romantic Foumbanese, the natural curiosity to know who these "Inglis People" looked like, especially those they had never seen before, those who had not liked to join but had now been beaten into line and five of the leading ones had actually arrived Foumban. So the curious crowds milled around, each onlooker no doubt in quest of his subject of interest. Clearly, this looked like a war victory celebration to which the Bamoums had been for centuries accustomed. The diverse ceremonies took the best part of the morning and the Westerners kept wondering when the real business would begin.

At last at about 11 o'clock we took our seats by tables linked in a rectangular order around the sides of the hall. The East Cameroon delegation led by President Ahidjo occupied what seemed to be the southern half of the meeting place; the KNDP delegation of ten faced the East Cameroon delegation on the northern side; the CPNC delegation of five sat on the western wing near the OK delegation of two. Opposite us on the eastern side sat the delegation of West Cameroon Chiefs in their flowing strongly coloured robes, and headwear of bristling tassels.

Ahidjo opened the Conference in good style, welcoming all who had come to contribute to the job of writing the constitution that was going to guide the Cameroon Republic. Premier Foncha and Dr. Endeley also spoke in the same vein as the earlier speaker. Then the bomb came down. President Ahidjo informed the conference that contrary to their expectation, the West Cameroon delegations had not seen and deliberated on the East Cameroon's proposals sent a good while before the West Cameroon All Party Conference in Mankon. This had been for the expressed purpose of the draft constituting the

basis of discussion in Mankon. Since, unfortunately that had not been done, Premier Foncha and his men from West Cameroon were therefore to look through the proposals and offer their views while they of the East, would wait until it was time to call them in, after the West Cameroonians had finished their scrutiny. The conference then rose leaving the West Cameroonians to commence deliberation of the proposals submitted by the East.

It was lunchtime, and we had to go with the rest, and to convene only after “midi.” Many of those at Foumban from the West still alive to read this account will recollect the hell of a job we had to wade through the East Cameroon proposals while the others waited for us and lounged about. The East Cameroon proposals were poles away from our ideas in Mankon. While we had gone for a loose Federation with a great deal of powers with the States, their proposals were completely the other way round. An overwhelming number of subjects was left to the Centre and the states were left with far less powers. The Federal House was to comprise representatives from the State Assemblies, and the Central Legislature was to appoint the President. That Monday afternoon, we studied as much as we could, these complicated proposals, which were so distant from our ideas in Mankon that, the days we had spent there clearly had served little purpose. This was the more so, as even the semblance of a united front we had tried to present in Mankon was swept away in Foumban. The cleavage was not only between the parties, but even within the KNDP itself.

As we progressed to examine the proposals, one position showed out clearly. Premier Foncha, having lost time in not showing us the East proposals in Mankon, treating them as a ‘secret’ document, now felt he had displeased his Eastern friends, and therefore stood for swallowing the proposals virtually hook, line and sinker. On the other hand, within his own camp A.N. Jua was forthright in holding that he had never seen people expected “to write a constitution in two days.” The battle of words was often grim and we spent a pretty good while over such arguments as what others felt idling and waiting for us, why we had not been shown the draft in Bamenda, etc.

The CPNC with the most experienced team, supported Jua’s view that we were being rushed through a difficult job of writing a constitution in a few days in order to make up for Foncha’s fault in not having shown us the East proposals while we were in Mankon. Now

we were double marching over a task that needed the most patient and careful examination. What explanation would we have to posterity for being driven like this. So, we went on hastily through the job arguing and quarrelling along, from Monday afternoon to Thursday evening. We took three and a half days to discuss the entire proposals while our Eastern colleagues went through their own agony of idling and waiting for us all that time.

Our comments were translated through the night of Thursday so that on Friday morning of July 21st, our views were ready for the attention of our Eastern colleagues. In the re-assembled Conference that Friday, President Ahidjo acknowledged the comments we had made to their proposals, indicating his acceptance of our views amongst the following matters while other points of divergence were to be handled at subsequent meetings:

- *It was agreed to have a Federal System of Government with two states, East Cameroon with Headquarters in Yaounde and West Cameroon with Headquarters in Buea. Subjects fell into those under the Federal authority and those under Regional competence. A Provisional Government went into place, pending completion of the Constitution and the holding of elections.*

- *The preference of the West Cameroonians for separate and direct elections to the National Assembly instead of what had been contained in the proposals was accepted.*

- *Elections to the National Assembly to be separate and distinct from those to the state assemblies.*

- *Also was accepted the view that rather than the National Assembly electing the President, an Executive President ought to face a full-blown election before the entire population.*

- *The view was also accepted that a law had to be rejected if it did not receive the support of 50% of the members from one state in the National Assembly.*

- *In respect of the Judiciary, the opinion of the West was that the matter stood referred to the Bar Association for their views.*

- *On the question of Fundamental Human Rights, the opinion of the West was that this be entrenched in the Constitution; but this was modified by Abidjo to this being in the Preamble to the Constitution.*

- *All other points of difference and all other unfinished business were to be discussed at subsequent meetings.*

- *The Conference rose on Friday afternoon July 2 1st 1961.*

The Foumban Conference is often regarded by some as a great success but by others as the best we could possibly do in an awkward situation. There is support for both arguments. Five days of effort of which the West used three and a half to study and comment on the East proposals, crowned by two brief plenary sessions, was considered too short for the first real East/West Cameroon effort to write a Constitution for the unified territory. Constitutions are never written in a hurry, because a constitution is not just a law which can be easily amended or modified, it is a law of laws which should not be easy to change if it must make for stability and continuity. We had no evidence of the type of experience our Eastern colleagues had had in the job of constitution making. For the West Cameroonians, ours had been in the Nigerian example, where the London conference of-1953 sat for weeks in July and August of that year; the reassembled Lagos Conference sat for two weeks; the 1957 Conference in London sat between 23rd May and 26th June; and the 1958 constitutional Conference in London covered several weeks.

The Foumban assignment held by many to be no less complicated than the Nigerian example was therefore considered, certainly too much for only five days. Others hold the view that more words do not necessarily make a better speech, but one fact must go on record. After Foumban the Opposition were never again invited to any of the subsequent meetings called to complete the task of writing a constitution for unified Cameroon. Henceforth the KNDP did it alone with the East and the only reason we could guess for this attitude is that the KNDP had returned to their earlier suspicions and lack of faith against the CPNC.

I regard their action a costly mistake to the nation because the right to write the constitution of a democratic country belongs to all shades of political opinion, not only to those at the time in power. The CPNC with a 13:13 balance in the West Cameroon House of Assembly felt entitled to contribute throughout the proceedings, especially when no one doubted the fact that that party possessed men of undoubted competence.



During the Foumban Conference in 1961 (left to right): Hon. Motombywoleta, Hon. S.T. Muna, President Ahmadou Ahidjo, Hon. N.N. Mbile.

However, the limitations of Foumban and the rest notwithstanding, in a constitution, it is the spirit of those applying it rather than the letter of its written word that finally counts. No matter the beauty or ruggedness of a constitution written or not, it is the spirit, the will and tolerance of those applying it, that constitute its over-riding value. The Cameroon case should therefore be judged more by the results we have obtained in thirty years and more of unification and independence, than by the brilliance or not of what was written in Foumban or elsewhere. In this, the judges are the Cameroonians themselves, and of course the watching world at large.

In the Cameroon story, the credit must indeed go to the spirit of Cameroonians generally for their virtually inexhaustible patience and forbearance, of even intolerable conditions. Today we can proudly claim success in the cause of peace in Cameroon second to none amongst African states. Until it was repealed, at no time was that section of the constitution resorted to and a bill or law rejected by 50 percent of the members of a Federated State. For thirty years and more since unification, we can reasonably claim that Cameroon has maintained a record unequalled by any country in the region around

them. Our national party was introduced by universal consensus amongst Cameroonian politicians. Since introduction of multipartism however, we have experienced several grim and unfortunate situations, the cause of which we suspect more from external influences on misguided Cameroonians, than from the genuine unadulterated character of the true Cameroonian. In all these achievements and more, it has overwhelmingly been the all round spirit of the Cameroonian, rather than the letter of our constitution and our laws that has been the over-riding influence. We may not have done more if we had spent five months instead of five days in writing our constitution in Foumban. Even though West Cameroonians may have come off Foumban with less than their earlier expectations, with less than their Mankon package, there should be no regrets that events jettisoned that loose arrangement of Mankon. Our Bamenda ideas were not without their own hazards. A loose union may have easily snapped at the slightest friction resulting either in a separate West Cameroon, or the eruption of civil war if the Easterners were tempted to resist the severance. No one can say for sure that a separate West Cameroon nation may not have produced another Marcias Nguema for us. We can see dangers and grave peril in a loose Federation as was naively conceived in Mankon.

KNDP Does It Alone During Provisional Arrangement

With Nigeria's independence in October 1960, the Southern Cameroons plebiscite on 11th February 1961, and the Foumban Conference in July 1961, it can be seen that there was a pretty good period (nearly nine months) when Southern Cameroons was under no effective Federal Authority. This is the period between secession from Nigeria and that of the effective application of the Foumban agreements. During this period, it is pertinent to record that even though there was a thirteen/thirteen parity between the KNDP and the KNCIKPP alliance in the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly, that party in power out of sheer greed and/or misconception of the finer application of majority power, did it alone.

The British government, as Administering Authority, had provided the defence of the territory during this period of no effective Federal Authority but the civil authority which ought to have been properly shared across the parties especially due to our parliamentary parity, was

carried on alone by a KNDP party that neither had the men nor the experience to do it alone at such a crucial period. This was the time when ten Representatives from Southern Cameroons were required in the Provisional Federal Parliament, and the KNDP sent in only their men. Ministers required in the Federal Government from Southern Cameroons were all only KNDP men. Administrative officers to replace the large number of expatriates who went, were selected from only KNDP grade II teachers. Southern Cameroonians diplomats to serve in the embassies abroad, were all from the KNDP party. When one considers this evidence of greed of the KNDP to line up Parliaments Regional and Central, Governments Regional and Central, Administration Regional and Central, diplomats, with only KNDP men and material, it should surprise no one why the quality of our men was no match for the great responsibility and duties that were entailed. Yet, with the connivance of the British Government and the Cameroun Republic Government, the KNDP was supported to do it alone to earn the obvious results that history has recorded.

One more point must be placed on record for the benefit of history. The KNDP were more frightened of the KNC/KPP opposition in the Southern Cameroons than in ensuring the best constitutional arrangements for the territory in the Federation that was being negotiated. Despite all the efforts and overtures of the KNC/KPP later CPNC, for united effort after the plebiscite battle, the KNDP persisted in its greed, fear and suspicion of the opposition to the point of absurdity. In terms of talent and experience necessary for assembling the necessary constitutional and administrative instruments for Southern Cameroons, the opposition could have contributed effectively with men of quality.

It must be reported that a number of civil servants called the "Cameroon Society" gave advice to the KNDP adventurers in secret from time to time, but what value is there in that which is done in secret instead of in the honest light of day? The "Cameroon Society" never came out in the open in the great debate over our future so that all shades of political opinion may benefit from their views if they had any. They were a group motivated more by tribal sentiment and personal interest in a KNDP empire, than in genuine belief in the best for the territory. As a result, this body that comprised quite intelligent persons virtually all of them civil servants, worked in the shadows where their ideas and views sometimes did more to mislead than

otherwise, in the great debate.

It is generally held that had the “Cameroon Society” been better organised of independent Cameroonian intellectuals divorced of tribal blindness, they may have constituted a useful middle force between the politicians, and balanced them off from some of their excesses. As it turned out, their virtually secret body was swept off its feet in the general storm of political war ending in their complete oblivion even during the constitutional talks.

Most of their members only surfaced as individuals to scramble for posts in the KNDP government, as reward for their often unknown nocturnal services. In opposition circles the conviction will long linger that the almost inexplicable dread of the opposition for which Foncha was prepared to embrace anything, was often more through the instigation of the so called “Cameroon Society” than from genuine belief that Endeley and Mbile could eat him up. The counter result to the fear of the KNDP goaded by its secret advisers produced in the opposition a backlash in the belief that any hope of West Cameroonians remaining united even in the preservation of those ideals, which we cherished, was day dreaming. It became crystal clear that the KNDP was bent only on the complete extinction of the opposition by any means fair or foul, in order, to establish a virtual dictatorship in Buea.

Why did the opposition come to this conclusion? After Foumban, despite the truce declared on our return from the United Nations, and as a result of which the CPNC gave all the co-operation possible, yet it was never invited to any further discussions even though it controlled 50 percent of the elected seats in the House of Assembly. The KNDP used this period to increase the number of seats from twenty-six to thirty seven in the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly and carved the constituencies to give that party overwhelming advantage, especially in the Bamenda (Grassland) area. The KNDP government at Buea also embarked on a policy of open intimidation and victimisation of opposition supporters.

1961 Elections

Then suddenly, the KNDP government declared elections for December 1961 to the enlarged House of 37 members even though,

we had had elections only in January 1959, and the five-year tenure for members was not halfway through. Of course, the spirit of “truce” was trampled under foot in the elections which had an unprecedented spate of irregularities and rigging.

The Mensah Commission

I personally tasted the KNDP at its worst when a young man in my own family group of Batanga, was raised against me in an attempt to disqualify my candidacy in the then Kumba North West constituency, a safe CPNC stronghold. The KNDP knowing that they could not win in a fair fight, brought up a frivolous case against me before the Chief Electoral Officer in order to disqualify me from being a candidate, on the ground that I did not go to my village personally to register as a voter, even though my name was properly registered as No. 44 under Lipenja I polling station, my village of birth. The Chief Electoral Officer argued strongly that he possessed no powers to disqualify Justice E.K. Mensah. He a man from being a candidate when once served as Attorney his name was duly registered in the General, Southern Cameroons and later constituency of his birth. That was a retired as Judge of the matter for the High Court after the Supreme Court of Ghana elections if anyone wished to protest. As the Prime Minister’s Office continued pressing, a compromise was struck for a Judicial Commission to investigate the complaint by Mr. V.N. Obie and to issue a decision on the matter.



Justice E.K. Mensah. He once served as Attorney General, Southern Cameroons and later retired as judge of the Supreme Court of Ghana

The learned Magistrate Emmanuel Kofi Mensah was therefore appointed by Prime Minister Foncha to conduct the Inquiry. He heard evidence a whole day from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. without break and displayed remarkable grasp, competence and the traditional judicial respect for truth during the investigation. S.D.O. Denis Hayden and other witnesses testified during the proceedings. Mr. V.N. Obie, a prospective KNDP candidate was of course the leading witness against me followed by one Mr. Ngilla who had been Chief Registration Officer for Ngolo-Batanga area. S.D.O. Dennis Hayden as Divisional Electoral Officer, an English man of remarkable integrity, unmoved by the KNDP party interest in the matter submitted very helpful information to assist the Commission. Also, the young man Edward Mbutu who was registration officer in charge of Lipenja registration area gave vital evidence. After a long day, the Commissioner (now Justice E.K. Mensah) ruled that my name was properly on the register and it could not be expunged. The learned Commissioner went further to say that the appearance in person and all the other processes for the registering of voters were formalities to prepare the register of voters. A qualified voter having been duly registered, the end result could not be upset by the type of complaint before the Commission. Hundreds of my supporters who had sat patiently throughout the proceedings

were duly rewarded by the verdict of the learned Commissioner and they were even the more rewarded later when I eventually won the seat with 8,000 votes plus against V.N. Obie's 200 plus votes and he lost his 50 pounds deposit.

On the Mensah Commission day the Prime Minister at Buea did not appear to have enjoyed his dinner that evening. His telephone call brought the news that Mbile had won at the Inquiry and since that constituency was a safe seat for the CPNC he now clearly saw himself facing the dreaded Mbile in the next House of Assembly. And so it came to be.

From this example, it can be seen what ruthless methods the KNDP used in the elections of December 1961 in which their target was to route the CPNC almost to the man by all means fair or foul. Every device was used to destroy the CPNC and there was psychologically such a bad time for the party to face an election that it was by the sheer will of man that Endeley and I kept the faithfuls together. We had in 1959, lost by a close 14:12 to the KNDP; we had just lost the plebiscite in February 1961 and now in December of the same year, we were fighting an election with all the odds against us.

As the December 30, 1961 election results started coming in, the KNDP was leading heavily. It looked like a rout. Our greatest loss was in Victoria South West, where the distinguished and veteran parliamentarian Hon. P.N. Motomby-Woleta lost to Mr. Lifio Carr of the KNDP. In Victoria North West, Dr. Endeley retained his seat against Mr. P.M. Kale of the KNDP. The Victoria South East and North East constituencies went to Mr. Mbua Monono and Mr. M.N. Ndoke all of the KNDP.

Dr. Endeley registered the only CPNC win in Victoria Division. In Kumba, the CPNC took five of the seven seats; Mr. H.N. Elangwe – Kumba South East, F.N. Ajebe-Sone – Kumba East, E.E. Ngone – Kumba North East, D.B. Monyongo – Kumba South West, N.N. Mbile – Kumba North West. J.M. Bokwe and J.E. Sona won the two seats for the KNDP in Kumba West and Kumba Central.

In Mamfe, S.E. Ncha of Mamfe North West came in for the CPNC while Mr. P.M. Kemcha, Mr. W.N.O. Effiom, Mr. Ekangaki and Mr. J.C. Lekunze came in for the KNDP for Mamfe East, Mamfe West, Mamfe South and Mamfe North respectively.

In Bamenda area, Mr. Foncha and Muna won fourteen seats for KNDP including the colourful Fon Angwafor III of Mankon as

independent. A.N. Jua, P. Mua, E.A. Mendi, S.E. Nji won in Wum for KNDP Mr. S.N. Tamfu and J.N. Nsame for C.P .N.C., in the Nkambe area while Mr. Ndongo, Mr. S.G.N. Yor, all won for KNDP

More Faithful Fall

My personal result though sure had not yet come in and members of my faithful were assembled in my sitting room to await the general results and mine in particular. Of course as we sat we discussed the sad fortune of our party affairs, taking stock of the seats trickling in on the CPNC score board. Suddenly, a dusty car pulled up in front of my house at Kumba and out came S.B. Ncha, one of our victorious candidates, the only one for us from Mamfe. The assembled CPNC boys quickly rose to cheer him. This was our hero, the invincible Ncha from Mamfe North West constituency. His arrival put a new spirit of hope in my assembled followers, but something struck me “why had Ncha come down so early from Mamfe?” The results were not yet complete and the first sitting of the House was still sometime away. Presently, Mr. Ncha pulled me aside for a secret chat. We walked to the garden, and under a tree, he broke to me the stunning piece of news. Since his results came through, he was under great pressure from his people. They were tired of his continued stand with the opposition party and since that party possessed no patronage for them, his people had continued to suffer in Cameroon politics. They had, therefore, resolved that he-declare for the KNDP and he was on the way to Buea to do so, but felt that I should know his decision. The shock was hard, but over the years I had seen enough of the vagaries of men to quickly adjust into even this latest one. After all, what could have been more stunning than the defeat of my friend and comrade, P.N. Motomby-Woleta. I contained the shock and tried to persuade this falling comrade from his course, but he was resolved beyond return. I then decided to thank him for the honest declaration of his intent to me. Until this day, of all the carpet crossers, I count Ncha the most honest of them all.

By the time the House of Assembly was convened for its opening session, there was whisper that more opposition men were on the way to abandoning ship. Soon the whispers grew louder and louder until names became audible. Ajebe Sone was the name that hit us most. This was one of our veteran politicians from Bakossi in Kumba, a former

member of Endeley's cabinet in 1953. He was indeed a big fish landed by the KNDP, but the woes of the CPNC were far from over. E.E. Ngone, our second member from Bakossi also crossed to the KNDP. When the House of Assembly finally assembled, the KNDP was occupying more than two thirds of the horseshoe table of the Southern Cameroons parliament. What remained of the CPNC from its 13:13 parity with the KNDP was only the left tip of the horseshoe; Endeley, Mbile, Elangwe, Monyongo and Tamfu.

One silent pride bubbled in me. Of the greatly eroded opposition three (Mbile, Elangwe, Monyongo) were of my Oroko tribe, standing firm. Our threat, "to die fighting to the man for our freedom" had not been carried out, but let those who waited in vain for this to happen take note that no Oroko born politician had ever crossed the carpet in the history of Cameroon politics; we marched to the end⁵.

Now, when the House had proceeded into full session and the new Government of Premier Foncha was lined up, a voice on the floor of the Assembly rose to register a complaint. It was the loud and unhappy voice of Mr. Ngone protesting against Mr. Ajebe-Sone having been made a Minister rather than he. After all, Ngone argued, he had been the first to cross the carpet before Ajebe-Sone to the KNDP and therefore he claimed seniority over him in their new party. Since the rule is "first come first served," he felt he should have been first offered the ministerial post. As the House and gallery roared with laughter while Mr. Ngone seriously raised his protest, those of us who still proudly kept the CPNC flag flying high sadly wondered what had become of our one time brave comrades of Bakossi. The low morale of legislators, symbolised by the large number of carpet crossings on the floor of the House of Assembly after the December elections of 1961, represented a very low point in the working of the multiparty system in Southern Cameroons. It made sheer nonsense of any claim that we were operating a multiparty system. Thinkers in the CPNC, therefore, came to the sad conclusion that the average Southern Cameroonians was either not ripe for multiparty politics or that he was too materialistic and wayward in character to withstand the strains and stresses that are part and parcel of multiparty politics. If anything lay in Cameroon politics, the course therefore might be in the idea of a

⁵ See *The Cameroon Federation* by Dr. Williard Johnson

national party about which there had been constant talk. If any event therefore pressured the CPNC more than anything else to bend its steps unreservedly in support of the call for a national party in Cameroon, it was the shocking experience of a virtual stampede in carpet crossing after the elections of December 30th, 1961. The point seemed clear; if Cameroonians could not bravely face whatever result a political cause brought to them, if they wanted always to be on the winning side, then party politics seemed out of place for them.

Honourable Motomby-Woleta Passes

To the CPNC the year 1961, ended in virtual tragedy. Most of our veteran politicians had been defeated. Others had turned coat even after winning election on our ticket. Our numbers in the House of Assembly had reduced to a bare handful. Our morale had never been lower, and short of dissolution the CPNC was listing heavily, and the captain and his surviving lieutenants just held on.

As the year 1962 began, this was our sad position. KNDP victimisation of anyone even remotely related to the CPNC had become severe. Some civil servants were suspended, others superseded in rank by green juniors, all because they had been suspected of pro-CPNC leaning or by their accident of birth were considered as inevitably harbouring CPNC sympathies. Foncha's KNDP became over confident, and now talked of CPNC men coming only one by one on their knees to join the party of which Foncha was "Life President." For Endeley and Mbile there would be no forgiveness, especially Mbile. This is the message that came across, and the CPNC were treated by the KNDP worse than Jews to Gentiles.

Then in March 1962 the hardest blow fell on the CPNC, Motomby-Woleta suddenly died in Victoria. I returned home one evening in early March at 9 p.m. to find a young lady, Emilia Luma waiting for me at home. My wife had made her a meal and given her a bed by the time I arrived home, but she was roused to give me the message that had brought her along. It was not good news. My friend, Peter Motomby-Woleta was seriously ill of his gastritis, which appeared to have reached the crisis point. He had sent her to me to get Dr. Fejer, an experienced surgeon, at the General Hospital Kumba to come down to Victoria to perform an operation on him. I immediately drove up to Dr. Fejer's house, (where I incidentally met Dr. G.G.

Dibue who was travelling on tour to Bamenda) and found Dr. Fejer and his guests at dinner. The doctor got up from table and met me aside, to enquire why I came. In a few words, I told him. He thought for a while and said, "Mr. Mbile, I am afraid, I cannot try it There are no tools here to attempt the operation. Also I must confess, I am feeling rusty to attempt such an operation. My advice, take your friend either to Ibadan or to Yaounde." I thanked the Doctor for his advice and left. After pondering the matter over, I resolved to proceed to Victoria, in the morning to see Peter first, and then arrange a Crop Culture plane to take him to Ibadan, or Yaounde.

Early next morning as I was driving past the Kumba Post Office on my way to Victoria, a young man ran swiftly from that direction and stopped me. He broke the dreaded news. Hon. Motomby- Woleta was dead. A telephone message had come through from Victoria, and the girls at the Kumba exchange were seen weeping. As I took in the story, a dark cloud descended over my eyes for moments. My head swam in a daze. Was I dreaming, or was it real, but around me was the noise of the growing traffic, it was broad day light, and indeed I was sitting at the wheel of my Opel Caravan with Emilia, Peter's girl beside me. No, it was no dream. I was merely wrestling with an impossible fact. It was impossible for me to believe that the only Motomby-Woleta, my friend and comrade in my life's calling was indeed no more. Even as I write this more than three decades after his death, I cannot tell how I drove the sixty miles and more to Victoria that tragic morning. One dreaded moment awaited me. If there had been a way out of it, and the cost was all I was worth in life, I would have readily paid. For sixty-four miles I wrestled with how I was going to face the sight of Motomby lying dead. Yet as the count down proceeded and the miles slid past to zero on my painful journey, I knew that my stubborn resistance to take in the hard truth could not alter the inevitable. At last Victoria came in sight and the dreaded moment was soon to be with me. The cars parked from the New Town Presbyterian Church yard were clearly part of the evidence. Then came to view, the hastening crowd with grim taut faces, weeping women with shrivelled hair and silent men looking bewildered; the evidence was complete.

I do not remember when I pulled up and parked the Caravan. Under the shimmering sun, I struggled out of the car, but when the crowd saw me, there rose such a deadening roar of voices wailing at their height that they completely drowned my own crying and tears.

Friendly hands steadied my erring steps as I staggered along. My feet finally found the steps up to Peter's sitting room where for many a year we had sat in private as well as at party caucuses; and there, as sure as death lay my departed friend and comrade. So, here at last slept this man, an intellectual giant who in his time displayed such talent in the force of words, and such grasp of the English tongue, that an authority no less than the Rt. Hon. Justice E.H. Sainsbury, Speaker of the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly once personally commended him as a brilliant and able parliamentarian. Here at last lay Peter Ndemba Motomby-Woleta, to me the most accomplished parliamentarian who ever took the floor of the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly.

Provisional Arrangements

There was the period between 11th February "plebiscite day" when we officially broke off from Nigeria and before the constitution of the Republic of Cameroon came into force. However hasty we tried to be with constitutional matters in order to see the unified country take its stride, we could not avoid this transitional period when some type of Government structure had to exist while the Constitutional arrangements were being worked out.

Especially urgent was the problem of choosing a Vice President to work with President Ahidjo in the unified Republic, since the constitutional processes were not ready for election of a Vice President, etc. Also a provisional Federal Government had to be appointed to take over the unified Republic during the interim period, pending the proper selection of a Federal Government, and the election of a National Assembly. As a matter of fact, there existed so much unfinished business by the time Southern Cameroons ceased to be a part of Nigeria, that the only way out was to agree on a form of provisional Federal Government, a provisional Federal Assembly, a provisional civil service, etc. In most of these, agreement was reached between the President of the Republic of Cameroun and the Prime Minister of Southern Cameroons in brief and cordial discussions between them. This avoided the long and tedious haggling that may otherwise have ensued in reaching agreement.

Of the major agreements the following deserve recording. The

President of the Republic of Cameroon became the President of the United Republic of Cameroon, while the Prime Minister of Southern Cameroons became Vice President. The Provisional National Assembly comprised fifty members, forty from the East and ten from the West. The Federal civil service, the diplomatic corps, the armed forces, all had to be placed under some provisional federal arrangement.

As mentioned earlier, in all these provisional positions, the KNDP party exhibited unpardonable greed and avarice. In the high offices that had to be filled (administrative, political, diplomatic) the KNDP did it all alone, appointing only persons accepted as being 100% KNDP. Those even remotely suspected of opposition leanings were heavily clamped down. The cases of Peter Efange, Eric Quan, to name only these few, are on record as persons who were removed from office with no explanation at all, save the suspicion that they harboured pro-CPNC sympathies.

When we take into consideration the fact that at independence, even more advanced countries faced the problem of qualified men, it can be appreciated how naive the KNDP founded by J.N. Foncha and A.N. Jua only in 1955 were, to have hoped to properly contain and find in 1961/62 all the competent manpower requisite for our diverse national services, from the limited ambit of their party membership.

The lack of magnanimity in victory displayed by Foncha's KNDP towards the opposition, which was only slightly less than the Government party in parliament (14: 12 and later 13: 13), coupled with the fact that the opposition often possessed more quality men than the Government party, appears to me to have been responsible for many of the failures and disappointments complained of in our national body politic in Cameroon since unification. Had all hands been on deck, we may have ended with better results.

Perhaps we may blame part of the harsh running of the KNDP Government at Buea to a possible misconception drawn from ancient tribal usage - those defeated and overrun in pre-European tribal wars often lost not only their freedom and their lands, but their wives and children were often seized by the conquerors. Could it be that it was already considered extremely benevolent on Foncha's part that the Endeley group was allowed to keep alive and retain their lands, wives and children despite the KNDP 14:12 victory of 1959? In that case, were we considered as asking for too much?

Indeed, if any indelible scars remain in our Cameroon political story such as will be unlikely for those of us who lived through the ordeal to forget, it is the harsh repression of Foncha's KNDP Government between 1959 and 1965, when CPNC members lived through a virtual hell of fear. Any thought therefore of our return to those days again can only produce a shudder of fear which even the spirit of Jua's palliative of a coalition Government in 1965, when he took over, cannot totally erase. The unending danger in the acts of Foncha's regime at Buea crowned by its manipulation of parliamentary seats in the House of Assembly during the 1961 elections and the scandalous carpet crossings that followed those elections, all conspire to build in me and in many of my school of thought granite hard distrust for multi-party politics at our time and age.

These various arrangements served until the constitution of the Federal Republic was completed and finally promulgated.

Cracks in the KNDP

Obedient to the human law that no empire lasts for ever, the KNDP ten-year-old empire began its decline with signs of eruption towards the mid sixties. The forces of human nature never fail to work given the appropriate background and so, to many students of human nature and of the science of politics, the convulsions that rocked and finally split the KNDP were no surprise. How else could the results have been in the face of the abundant prerequisites laid out by the KNDP and its leadership for its own disintegration. To many observers like my humble self, the claim of many of its fanatics that the KNDP would last forever, and the assumption of the title of "Life President" by its leader, were a big joke. Could the KNDP hold together when by its own policies it tried to eat up everything and everybody political in Southern Cameroons? Did the Creole humorist not say "one man chop all, bele burst"?

Yes, the KNDP had eaten most of the material politics in the territory, perhaps a bit too much for its young stomach. Born in 1955 the party was only ten by the mid sixties. Yet in its inexperienced stomach, like a young greedy python, it had swallowed a mighty lot. There were the original team (under Foncha and Jua) that broke away from the KNC; there were those who jumped on the KNDP bandwagon still wearing UPC and OK vests beneath; there were the

younger intellectuals who had returned from colleges and universities whose ideas now greatly influenced the course of the party; there were even 'the carpet crossers who had joined in direct exchange for political spoils, and of course, there were those who saw and perhaps rightly too, that the opposition having been driven down to only a gallant few, the only hope for a place in Southern Cameroons lay in the KNDP. So here was a crowd held together by such a diversity of interests that in no time there erupted a violent explosion that followed the infighting and power struggle that such a conglomeration of conflicting interests was bound to produce.

The KNDP ninth convention was held in Bamenda Community Hall in August 1963, and here, the beginning of the party crack-up commenced. The interim period when J.N. Foncha was both Premier of Southern Cameroons as well as Vice President of the United Republic now ending, the question of a possible successor to him as Prime Minister at Buea faced the Bamenda convention. It was generally accepted that the holder of the post of Vice President of the party would be the automatic successor to Foncha as Prime Minister, while Foncha became full time Vice President in Yaounde. So who was to be this Prime Minister? After much haggling and lobbying, two contenders for the stool stood out: S.T. Muna and A.N. Jua. Three men J.M. Bokwe, then Secretary of State Works and Transport; P.M. Kemcha, Secretary of State for Labour; and IN. Lafon, Secretary of State for Local Government, had earlier been eliminated in the contest. The two finalists were men of no small standing. S.T. Muna was the only full Minister from Southern Cameroons in the Federal Government in Yaounde, charged with responsibility for Post and Telecommunications. A.N. Jua co-founder with Foncha of the KNDP was Minister of Finance at Buea after turning down the post of Deputy Minister of Health in Yaounde. Both men had considerable following in the territory as a whole and within their tribal groups.

Then behind each man there was a train of supporters prominent amongst them being E.T. Egbe, W.N.O Effiom, J.M. Bokwe for Muna and Nzo Ekangaki, P.M. Kemcha, J.N. Lafon for Jua to name only these few. The battle lines were tautly drawn not only for the post of Vice President but also for that of Secretary General of the KNDP. While Muna and Jua vied for the former, Egbe and Nzo, rivalled for the latter post. The count showed Jua scoring 175, Muna 73; Ekangaki 159, Egbe 95. So A.N. Jua became Vice President, and Ekangaki

Secretary General. E. T. Egbe was made Legal Adviser, and J.M. Bokwe second Vice President. Despite this effort to patch the split, the crack in the KNDP had begun. Henceforth, the party was roughly in two unequal halves with Foncha in between as leader. A number of by-elections occasioned by the selection of certain assemblymen to the Federal National Assembly went further to widen the crack in the party, as the factions sometimes backed rival candidates. All these goings on within the KNDP were of course keenly watched by the CPNC whose strategists had long anticipated such eruption. Politicians and students of the science of politics can see easily when the net is dragging heavy for a big catch. Clearly the KNDP sun had long passed midday, and the lengthening shadows could only forecast one thing – the coming of night.

In November 1964, the KNDP assembled at Kumba for its 10th and virtually final convention. For between then and the Bamenda confab of August 1963, so much had happened that the stage was fully set for the climax that was soon to emerge. The Presidential elections billed for April 1965 were so dangerously close that there was no time to play with on the question of who exactly was to be the Prime Minister in West Cameroon when Foncha joined Ahidjo as Vice President of the Federal Republic. This was because, even though the Bamenda convention had elected Jua Vice President of the KNDP, there was nothing in the constitution of the party that made him the automatic nominee of the party for Prime Minister. Constitutionally the power to seat anyone as Prime Minister of West Cameroon lay in the hands of two authorities, the President of the Republic to nominate and the Western House of Assembly to ratify. So the Kumba KNDP convention amended the party constitution to read “Where the leader of the KNDP is an elected member of the West Cameroon House of Assembly, he shall be the party leader of the parliamentary wing and where the KNDP is the majority party, he shall be recommended to become the Prime Minister.” Ambiguous as, this read, the intention of the Kumba convention was to make it clear that the holder of the party post next to Foncha’s was to be the party nominee for the post of Prime Minister when he vacated. The debate on this amendment of the KNDP constitution evoked bitter exchanges in the convention. One point of view spearheaded by E.T. Egbe was that the appointment of Prime Minister was the constitutional prerogative of the President of the Republic with ratification by the

West Cameroon House of Assembly and the party ought to do nothing that could be interpreted as interfering with that exercise of the prerogatives of the President and that of the House of Assembly. Egbe wondered if the convention would not soon start nominating Ministers for the President.

The other point of-view led by Ekanghaki countered that despite the constitutional prerogatives referred to by the earlier speaker, within the party system in a democracy, the KNDP supreme body was entitled to require the parliamentary wing to abide by its decisions. Muna was persuaded by his supporters to step down for Jua for the post of Vice President, and the amendment meant that Jua as Vice President was the party nominee for Prime Minister of West Cameroon. The debate was close to violence between the opposing factions at the Kumba convention and the signal was unmistakable.

In order to ensure that the Assembly's right of ratification did not conflict with the President's power of appointing the Prime Minister, prior consultations were made. Foncha did his consultation first and found that Jua commanded some 23 out of the thirty or so KNDP members of the House. President Ahidjo also conducted consultation, his range covering all Assemblymen, all members of the House of Chiefs, all Secretaries of State, the Federal Deputies and Federal West Cameroon Ministers. These consultations no doubt indicated the reading and President Ahidjo named A.N. Jua as Prime Minister while the House of Assembly unanimously confirmed the appointment.

Mr. P.M. Kale became Speaker of the House of Assembly, a post he held with great distinction until his death at Buea – in August 1966.

Premier Jua's Government 1965

P.M. Kamuka <i>Minister of Finance</i>		P.M. Kale <i>Speaker of the House of Assembly</i>
Dr. E.M.L. Eadesley <i>Leader of the House of Assembly</i>		N.N. Mbile <i>Secretary of State Works and Transport</i>
P. Maa <i>Secretary of State for Interior</i>		J.N. Lafon <i>Secretary of State for Local Government</i>
S.N. Tamba <i>Secretary of State for Economics and Planning</i>	F. N. Ajibé Sona <i>Secretary of State for Agriculture</i>	L.M. Ndamukong <i>Secretary of State Education & Social Welfare</i>
S.E. Nuba <i>Secretary of State Prime Minister's Office</i>	J. N. Nsamenang <i>Secretary of State for Forest and Veterinary Services</i>	M. M. Monono <i>Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Works &</i>
J.H. Nganje <i>Secretary of State Co-operatives & Comm. Development</i>	S.N.G. Yot <i>Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture</i>	A. W. Daiga <i>Parliamentary Secretary Ministry of Local Gov't</i>
R.P. Ayak <i>Acting Clerk Assistant</i>	Mr. F. Patcha <i>Sergeant at Arms</i>	

The appointment of Jua as Prime Minister turned out to be the last straw on the back of the KNDP. Those who had disagreed with the party constitution by continuing to back Muna were suspended from the KNDP by its President. The action was ratified by the Central Working Committee, but later changed to expulsion by the KNDP Executive Committee. Muna had travelled out of the country when the KNDP Executive Committee tried and expelled the others, so action on his case was postponed. However, before the KNDP Executive could hold another meeting, Mr. Muna returned and tendered his resignation from the KNDP.

In all, ten leaders left the KNDP - S.T. Muna, E.T. Egbe, W.N.O. Effiom, J.M. Bokwe, W.N. Ndoke, Sam Mofor, L.I. Umenjoh, J.K.N. Tataw, B.T. Sakah and Martin Fusi. These men quickly picked up the gauntlet, and launched a new party named Cameroon United Congress (CUC) with Muna as its leader. The parting of the ways was complete, and the Cameroon public kept its fingers crossed to see what the three-pronged party system KNDP, CPNC, CUC was going to bring about in Southern Cameroons, but this was not to be, as subsequent events were to show.

Jua Heads Coalition Government

The withdrawal in 1965 of so many men from the KNDP left that party greatly weakened both in the House of Assembly and in the territory in general, resulting in their need to seek support from the CPNC and in hastening the arrival of a national party. So, one can say that out of disunity in the KNDP there came unity in the nation, or at least that this incident hastened the process of national unity.

In the Jua Government of May 1965, there were eight Ministers apart from the Prime Minister: P.M. Kemcha:

Finance, J.N. Lafon: Local Government, J.H. Nganje: Cooperative and Community Development, L.M. Ndamukong:

Education and Social Welfare, P.N. Mua: Interior, F.N. Ajebe-Sone: Agriculture, J.N. Nsame: Forestry and Veterinary Services, S.E.

Ncha: Prime Minister's Office.

As Prime Minister, Jua worked hard to consolidate his position, his most effective approach was his call for unity right from his inaugural speech, when he said, "Mr. Speaker, I shall like to see both the Government and the Opposition on the floor of this House co-operate as never before so that the West Cameroon electorate may reap maximum benefit from the efforts of the State Parliament. My Government will therefore stretch a right hand of fellowship to the opposition and its supporters both from within and outside this House." Earlier, during the speech he had said, "the Opposition is respected and respectable" The Opposition responded favourably.

The time was ripe for the first major step to be taken towards the goal of national unity in Cameroon. Jua's approach, unlike Foncha's, was a right hand of friendship on the basis of solid mutual respect between the KNDP and CPNC. It did not take long for both sides to arrive at some working arrangement by the formation 'of a coalition Government between the two parties. So in September 1965, the CPNC received three propositions, N.N. Mbile became Secretary of State for Works and Transport, S.N. Tamfu was Secretary of State Prime Minister's Office responsible for Statutory Corporations and Dr. E.M.L. Endeley became Leader of the House of Assembly, with Cabinet rank. So Tamfu and I met our old comrades Ajebe-Sone, J.N. Nsame and S.E. Ncha as members of Jua's cabinet, and without ever expressing it, there was that extra attachment consequent upon our earlier struggles together.

For two years and more the coalition Government of A.N. Jua directed the affairs of the Government of West Cameroon in a spirit never before known since the advent of the KNDP Government era in 1959. For even though the Government inherited the prejudices of the earlier Foncha period, there could be no question of the Jua Government being steeped in any of the excesses of the earlier regime, like the open victimisation of political opponents. The position had greatly changed. Even to the CUC men on the floor of the Assembly who now styled themselves "opposition" it was a term assumed more out of jest and custom than out of conviction. Very often, it sounded like a joke when W.N.D. Effiom who had been in charge of the Ministry of Works and Transport in Foncha's Government, rose as opposition to criticise the Department of P.W.D. which he had headed only some months before.

The Spirit of National Unity

There was, despite all that anyone did, the spirit of national unity creeping slowly but surely on every one. For the voice of President Ahidjo was sounding loud and clear that all Cameroonians sink their differences in the interest of the formation of a National Party, the CNJJ. The call of President Ahidjo apart, the experience of most honest politicians and public spirited Cameroonians in regard to multiparty politics had long revealed that the bulk of the African followers of any political party are influenced not by any doctrinaire or ideological beliefs but more by tribal and ethnic loyalties. Tribalism is unprogressive in the main, since its adherents are blind to genuine values and merit but are enslaved to tribal sentiment and/or interests. Since tribal interests often conflict with national goals, parties hinged on ethnic sentiment or on mere personalities cannot adequately serve a nation. Tribesmen who constitute the bulk of our population are often passionately chained to tribal loyalties and sentiment. Consequently, political parties generally run along tribal lines as this is the most convenient means for most African politicians to rise to power. Also, the concept of party politics and of government and opposition is little understood in a fragmentary, mainly traditional society. The result in the case of Southern Cameroons politics was that tribal compartments were engulfed in bitter and acrimonious feuds kindled by old tribal scores and further heightened by the new political ambitions and pursuits dictated by the urgings of expedience.

So, in party politics we virtually revived the pre-European bitterness generated by tribal wars and other animosities. At election campaigns much bitterness was stirred up, and after the results, the victorious and vanquished ethnic groups just fell full apart. Then, too, since the tribal groups are never equal and yet the quality of human material does not necessarily exist more in the bigger group, the winning majorities often found themselves appointing misfits to important public offices instead of utilising more competent human material often within the vanquished minorities. It must as a matter of fact be admitted that more often than not, the minority groups possessed better quality of men, but such brilliance could not be accepted by the majority for obvious reasons. Yet, nature often compensates in quality, where it has cheated in quantity.

Against these hard facts of the political realities of Cameroon, most thinkers wondered whether the advantages, if any, in party politics compared anywhere with the great benefits in a national party. Those to serve are selected more on merit than to satisfy the sentiment of a victorious majority. There is a better opportunity to spread out more nationally, whatever benefits there are to share. Elections, which are the general source of feuds and strife within the national fabric, are quietly conducted without bitterness, since the winners and losers are selected peacefully on a list. The expensive speculation in multiparty elections which breeds intense bitterness in the event of defeat, is eliminated. The winner or loser spends nothing beyond his/her effort in writing the application for consideration, and so has little reason not to quietly accept the results, which ever way they go. He who invests nothing in a venture has little reason not to quietly accept the verdict of the gods of political fortune.

Examples abound where party politics have not always produced the best men to have been selected. After independence from European rule, there has existed one over-riding denominator for all African political parties development of the people. Any speck of difference exists only in the degree of the ability and honesty of those appointed to pursue this objective, and there is no known formula by which we can ever establish which group is blessed with a preponderance of such talent. The safest bet is the nation as a whole, and nothing represents the national consensus better than a national party. This is the spirit that formed the basis of the administration of pre-European governments in Africa, where there was "government" and no "opposition," and where voting was unknown.

I was a sure horse in my constituency during the multiparty days (1953-1965), and had often been cited as one of our best examples of parliamentary talent. The emergence of a national party, and its election processing robbed me of the enjoyment of my singular personal capacity to retain my parliamentary seat, since selection of candidates was now vested in the Executive Committee of the national. Yet I still prefer the national party system for the sons already spelt above. The cost of my earlier victories left me in the end with nothing but empty glory to my credit. I therefore reckon my 1967 win under the CNU national party, my most effective success in my political career. My seat cost me only fifty francs (50FCFA); 5 francs for e cost of a sheet of foolscap paper, on which I wrote the w lines of

my application for consideration, 5 francs for the cost of an envelope and 40 francs for the cost of the stage stamp to Yaounde. In return, I won my seat to parliament from 1968-1972 and was appointed a Minister in the Governments of Prime Minister A.N. Jua and S.T. Muna. I have never spent so little to gain a parliamentary seat in all the battles of my multiparty days. How better can we assess the benefits of the national party system among other advantages, than in this simple example. In addition, after the election I encountered the least controversy and bitterness ever, on winning a parliamentary seat.

Muna Becomes Prime Minister

The coalition Government of Prime Minister Jua came to a crucial milestone by the year ending 1967, when the CNU Central Committee adopted the party list to fill the 37 seats in the West Cameroon House of Assembly. Two important members of the West Cameroon Government fell out of the CNU list – P.M. Kemcha, who had virtually been Deputy Prime Minister in the Jua Government in-charge of the vital Ministry of Finance, and F.N. Ajebe-Sone, Minister for Education. Their removal was a hard blow, but this was only the beginning of sadder days that yet awaited the Jua regime,

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As the early days of January 1968 dawned on sleepy Buea, a rustle of political wind swept through the air. For, faithful to law and custom, the President of the Republic was due soon in Buea to appoint a new Prime Minister. Most people expected the reappointment of Mr. Jua, as his Government was considered fairly popular and established. He had taken the biggest step of them all, towards the realisation of the much talked of national party by establishing a coalition Government between the KNDP and the CPNC at Buea. His rival (Muna) during the 1965 feud, was not a member of the West Cameroon House of Assembly, and even though the constitution now allowed a non member to be appointed, many did not expect this to happen at that stage. From Jua's own confidence and cool bearing the impression was gained that he was certain of reappointment as Prime Minister. As a matter of fact it is believed that on the day when the announcement was made of the new Prime Minister by the Speaker in the West Cameroon House of Assembly, Mr. Jua had his acceptance speech in his coat pocket. Of course, the speech was never made, because fate had ordained otherwise and whatever Jua may have said is lost to the pages of Cameroon history.

It was early January 1968 at Buea. There was excitement and fever everywhere. Flags and buntings were fluttering in the morning mountain air of the West Cameroon State capital and the population of Buea had swollen to more than twice. As the hour of ten drew near, crowds of people were seen streaming towards the West Cameroon House of Assembly buildings. Soon the members of the House began arriving to take their seats. The public gallery was packed to overflowing until those crowding on the lawns and verandas of the

House became many times more than those in the regular public gallery. The police band in their brilliant white uniforms and gleaming instruments playing a popular tune marched smartly in the morning sun and took their place on the South Eastern lawns of the House of Assembly.

All this excitement and ceremony were clearly in excess of the normal opening of parliament at Buea. The extra splash was prompted by two significant factors; President Amadou Ahidjo was personally in Buea, and he was going to name a new Prime Minister. Augustine Ngom Jua, the incumbent Prime Minister finally arrived preceded by his Ministers. He was dressed in a dark well-cut English suit, and was flanked by his Ministers sitting according to an established protocol. The low hum of voices in the Assembly and the gallery was in strict keeping with tradition, for parliament was no place for the market chattering, especially when it had such serious business in hand. In the House and the gallery, faces looked grim and the seething tension in those present could hardly be concealed.

At the stroke of ten, there were three loud bangs at the door behind the Speakers' chair, and at the end of the third bang, the door was opened by the Sergeant at Arms. In walked the Speaker Mr. W.N.O. Effiom, wearing his full robes and wig. The members and those in the gallery rose to their feet as the Speaker walked up to his throne, bowing right and then left, before sitting down. All those in the Assembly and in the gallery bowed in response to the Speaker's respects before taking their own seats. There was now such dead silence that one could hear a pin drop. This is the type of silence that precedes an event like the declaration of war, the naming of a king or the appointment of a President or Prime Minister. It comes once in a long while, and few are ever blessed to be personally present. All eyes were fixed on the Speaker for he had at that moment an important message for the House and the State, from the President of the Republic.

As the Speaker and the House waited, a despatch rider from the "Presidency" arrived and saluting the chair handed him an envelope. He rapidly unfolded it, turned his eyes to the members and said, "Honourable members, I have a message from his Excellency the President of the Republic which I wish to convey to the house." Then he turned to the paper and began to read something similar to the following; "I, Amadou Ahidjo, President of the Federal Republic of

Cameroon, by virtue of... by virtue of... do name Solomon Tandeng Muna, the Prime Minister of the Federated State of West Cameroon.”

The words fell on all, like an electric shock, from which it takes at least some moments to recoil. But those listening quickly came round before you could count three, and there now rose such a spontaneous roar from the assembled crowd that the din of human voices could be heard for miles around the Cameroon Mountain slope of Buca. Thousands of people rejoicing at the choice of their favourite, the police band striking a march, the cars and jeeps dashing forward and backward in the general melee, overexcited favourites of the winning candidate wailing and dancing for joy, all created such an atmosphere that only the lapse of time could get matters quiet. To some, the world had come to an end, either in infinite joy in the triumph of their choice, or by the agony of their passion in the defeat of their candidate. Mr. Muna striding down the pavement to the doors of the House of Assembly and being heavily cheered by the crowd was swept into the Prime Minister's waiting Mercedes. Mr. Jua just had enough nerve to rise from his seat and walk out to the veranda where he waited patiently until an Opel Record came round into which he was whisked to the Schloss (the Prime Minister's lodge). We the Ministers, dazed and shaken, found our way out of the precincts of the House of Assembly as best we could. To most of the crowd, our world had come to an end, and we were no more than dry leaves being swept before a storm.

According to custom and convention, the moment Prime Minister Muna was appointed, his predecessor and all his Ministers were automatically removed from office. The new Prime Minister was now to conduct the necessary consultations for lining up a new cabinet. All day and night this occupied the attention of those of his inner circle, so that by the next day, President Ahidjo could be presented with the new Ministers who by the Constitution he was to appoint. As for those of us who had served in the Jua cabinet, our fate was like that of the grains of a cob of corn that had been thrown away. With luck or the turn of fate even a grain so rejected could land on good ground, sprout and grow; but in the normal course of events, the fate of a cob so disowned foretells that of its grains. Thus hung the fate of several of us; but a pertinent point was that by this time, we had all formed the CNU party of which all those in the House of Assembly were members. The question on many lips was, could Muna form a cabinet

all of his own choice as if his party had won a majority in parliament? As everybody knew, Mr. Muna was not even one of the thirty seven elected members of the West Cameroon House of Assembly. Was President Ahidjo going to give Mr. Muna a totally free hand in setting up the Government in Buea, or were the CNU: authorities led by the President himself going to influence the selection of a Government that was to reflect the new spirit of national unity? These were the questions on many lips as discussion went on behind the scene over who was or who was not going to be in the new scheme of things.

In the intense lobbying that spanned through the night of this fateful day in January 1968, a number of names deserve to go on record as being amongst those whose voices and opinions dictated the final outcome and shape of the Muna cabinet. I must start with President Ahidjo himself who like a master craftsman at the helm of the ship of state stood for the best compromise against any attempt of the Muna faction to establish a virtual CUC regime. Then we must name Mr. Jean Claude Ngoh, Federal Inspector of Administration at Buea who no doubt played a key role as the President's principal counsellor on the spot. The names of, Dr. B.N. Fonlon, Ekangaki, H.N. Elangwe, Emanuel T. Egbe cannot escape mention in this record amongst those who throughout the negotiations of that fateful night must have greatly influenced the list that finally formed the cabinet of Prime Minister Muna. Of course, we cannot forget the name of Mr. Muna himself who had the duty and responsibility of piloting the affairs of West Cameroon as Prime Minister. Along with these, we must concede that there must have been a good many of those unknown and unnamed who did make their honest contribution towards setting up the cabinet of Mr. Muna which reasonably reflected that spirit of compromise and national unity then drifting into the Cameroon political atmosphere.

A Happy Surprise

The day following the appointment of Prime Minister Muna dawned on an anxious community speculating widely on who Muna's Ministers were going to be. The intense lobbying of the day and night before, could be felt from the ceaseless movement of cars and the almost non-stop holding of meetings by the inner circle of the Prime Minister. As usual, I rose early and prepared myself for the day.

Sometime after breakfast the telephone rang, and when I picked up the receiver, the voice on the other side was that of Hon. Ekangaki. "Is that Hon. Mbile"? "Speaking." "This is Nzo" "Yes I can hear that, good morning Honourable" "Good morning, I am speaking from the Prime Minister's Rest House. Can you come right away please?" and he hung up. As I drove to the green former Elders and Fyffes House now converted into a Rest House for ministers, I wondered if this sharp call from Nzo was not behind some happy surprise.

By the Rest House door, I met Mr. Ekangaki. His broad smile and the wink in his eye told a story deeper than words; but in a few snap words his information was clear. The Prime Minister was waiting to see me. I moved to the door that sealed Mr. Muna from the rest of those around, taking note of three men, Nzo, Fonlon, Elangwe. Their reception and smiles revealed to a cute observer like myself, that they had fought and won on my side. The last tip came from Elangwe, who speaking in our tribal dialect to stress the gravity of his counsel said, "Whatever you are offered don't refuse." There was little time to respond to these friends, but their message was complete. As I tapped the door for the Prime Minister to let me in, I had no doubt in my mind what broadly I was going to hear. Also, the silent counsel of those who must have put in a firm word for me through the sifting in the night was as clear as crystal. "Don't let us down, we have fought it through for you."

So, as the door snapped open and I faced Mr. Muna still in his pyjamas under his dressing gown, I was prepared for the interview however hard or bull faced. He showed me to a chair, while he sat on the edge of his bed and faced me square. The preliminary greetings between us over, the Prime Minister quickly broke the ice. "Well, we have decided to give you a chance to serve in my Government. However, you will not remain in the portfolio of Works and Transport that you held before. We have created a new Ministry of Lands and Surveys, and you are being considered to take charge of that Ministry. I would like to hear your views." Upon this, I informed my Head of Government, that I was willing to serve, and that I was grateful for the opportunity. He acknowledged what I had said, and added that he expected every minister in his Government to do his best, ending on a stem note "However, this must be clear, the slightest mistake you are out." This was not the time and place for argument or debate. So I bowed to the warning and rose to go, for indeed the time was short to

be at the President's Palace by ten o'clock for presentation of the new Ministers to the Head of State.

I soon learned who my other colleagues were, and the complete Muna cabinet: H.N. Elangwe, Finance; J.C. Kangkolo, Natural Resources; M.N. Luma, Prime Minister's Office & State Development; S.N. Tamfu, Works and Transport; B.T. Foretia, Public Service; B.T. Sakah, Interior; N.N. Mbile, Lands and : Surveys; J.C. Wanzie, Education. Thus stood the West Cameroon Government that commenced to administer the affairs of West Cameroon under Prime Minister Muna in 1968. The West Cameroon House of Assembly also embraced the Parliamentary Committee system more than ever before, and the new regime leaned heavily eastward. The new Prime Minister, though not an elected member of the House found no difficulty in being assigned the first seat on the Government bench in the West Cameroon Parliament, and in his maiden speech Mr. Muna fully expounded on the policy of his regime under the banner of the C.N.U and the supreme leadership of President Amadou Ahidjo. The rest of the year 1968 flowed on without any striking incident. My 8th child came, a son named Solomon Tapea Mbile, partly in honour, partly in remembrance of Solomon Tandeng Muna's capture of the post of Premier of West Cameroon. As I write, young Solomon is already an engineer in the service of the Cameroon Development Corporation after a successful academic career through the University of Lagos and later the University of Benin, Nigeria, from where he had obtained his Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees respectively. So, many of the seeds of the Muna regime are growing great and waxing strong. How better can we remember a time and age than by the sacred yardstick of its off-springs?

I Meet an Angry Fon

On 10th February 1968, while serving as Secretary of State in-charge of Lands and. Surveys, in the then West Cameroon Government, I met a very angry Fon Galega II of Bali in his Council. I had come up from Buea as an emissary of the West Cameroon Government to meet the Bali on the sensitive question of land from them, to enable the people of Chomba village have more land to subsist on, and an outlet to the Mamfe/Bamenda road. Chomba village lies exactly six minutes walk from the Mamfe/Bamenda road, but was

completely shut in. The land through which a branch road to the village could have been made belonged to the Bali and the unpleasant skirmishes between the Widikum and Bali tribes in the early fifties were still lingering in men's minds. Chomba belongs to the Widikum. Owing to their shut-in position, the people found themselves incapable of participating effectively in the mainstream of Cameroon economic life, and head loading continued to be the only mode of conveying their commodities to the Mamfe-Bamenda main road. Of course the Bali could not tolerate the Chomba to drive a road through "their territory" and even a footpath through this Bali territory was a risk to the Chomba village folk.

The West Cameroon Government therefore faced a real dilemma – either they were to abandon their responsibility to the Chomba over their need of land for bare subsistence and an outlet to the Bamenda/Bali road, or cave in to the Bali to whom the mere mention of the words "land for the Chombas" almost sounded sacrilegious. Even in the face of Bali threat and displeasure something therefore had to be done, to alleviate the suffering of the Chomba who were literally starved of land for mere subsistence farming, while the Bali controlled vast holdings far in excess of their agrarian needs.

In their attempt to resolve the Bali/Chomba land dispute that had been dragging on since 1930, the British authorities had been presented with a catalogue of recommendations:

In April 1954, Resident Westmacott had made his recommendations for the settlement of the dispute on the following grounds.-

1. That the Chomba people do not have sufficient land to cater for their needs, thus, in their efforts to obtain more land they continue to claim land which the Bali people insist is their own. The Balis themselves appreciate that the Chomba are short of land.

2. That the Manson Commission of Inquiry into certain land disputes between the Widikum and Bali people had earlier recommended and the then Nigerian Government had accepted, "that if, at any future date, it becomes desirable after full investigation, that there should be a boundary adjustment between the people of Bali and any of the Widikum communities owing to the insufficiency of the land occupied by any such community, then there should be paid by the Government to the Bali people, compensation in respect of any portion of land which the Bali people may in consequence be dispossessed of."

3. That following the acceptance by Government of (2) above the then Nigerian Government took note of the undertaking made by a spokesman on behalf of the Bali Nyonga people, in April, 1952, namely, that, "We the Bali people are prepared to give concessions of land to the Widikum in our Mengem Mbo and Mengem Muwa areas, a portion each equal in size out of these two areas. In these two places which we are prepared to give, the people of Mengem Mbo and Mengem Muwa can settle and live side by side with their Widikum brothers without interference at all from Bali. Conversely, we do not want any interference from them. We propose that the nature and extent of this concession be settled amicably by the Bali people with the Widikum people. We are prepared to enter into negotiations but before doing so we require the Widikums;

a) To respect the existing boundaries, and

b) Withdraw their request that we acknowledge them as landlords (of Bali land) you can rest assured that the concessions we make will be of good land."

In compliance with this Bali promise, and the Manson recommendation mentioned above, Mr Brayne-Baker, Resident Bamenda Province, commenced investigation in June, 1953. In his report he wrote in respect of the Bali/Chomba boundary dispute as follows:

"Village area of Chomba adjoins that of Nsongwa. It was decided to measure the land, which amounted to 2470 acres. The Agricultural Superintendent made the following report,

"In many respects the land is similar to that of Nsongwa, though on the whole did not appear to be so badly eroded. The steep hillsides on the perimeter are not suited for farming being too steep and rocky. They would be ideal for a fuel plantation. As with the Nsongwa area, I consider that the area is sufficient to support the present population, but that no further immigration should be permitted."

Following the Bryne-Baker report, Resident Westmacott, in 1954, noted and decided as follows:

"In the cases of both of the above villages, I consider that, whilst the areas might be sufficient to support present populations, small additions to them would be justified as a precautionary measure against future expansion. The present Bali boundary drives a wedge of land into both Nsongwa and Chomba territory, an area which has been the subject of previous litigation between the three parties, and I consequently decided that the best method of affording the small addition was to flatten out the Bali boundary and to share the wedge of land thus excised, between

the two villages. After negotiation, the Balis agreed to this plan and an area of 162 acres was thus made available to the two villages. The land is excellent for farming and contains a considerable quantity of raffia palm, a very valuable commodity both as a source of mimbo-wine and building materials."

All these antecedents before I arrived Bali on 10th February 1968, fifteen years later, show what effort the authorities before me had made to solve a problem which continued to need solution. One inescapable fact continued to stare all in the face, the Chomba population were short of land and their continued agitation for additional land over the years was based on very compelling reasons. The land so far given to them proved inadequate, hilly, unproductive and the village itself continued to be land locked. There was no room for normal expansion, not even an access to the Mamfe-Bamenda highway. The Chomba people even as they walked and head-loaded their produce to the main road were forced to pass through Bali land and thus exposed themselves to the charge of trespass to say the least. Against this background, the West Cameroon Government of Independent Cameroon could not sit idly by while the Chombas suffered and starved, and while the Bali controlled huge lands only next door, totally surplus to their needs. On the other hand, the Government was most resolved to obtain land from the Bali only through peaceful negotiation and on the payment of equitable compensation.

One significant consideration weighed heavily on the West Cameroon Government and on me. At that specific period, West Cameroon lands were governed by the Lands and Native Rights Ordinance, the spirit of which recognised the principle of the communal ownership of the lands in the territory, except those under the "fourth schedule." The law recognised communities or villages as the customary owners of the land within the limits of their communities, and thus came the loose concept of the "entire West Cameroon territorial community jointly owning the native lands in the entire plantations, in the South West Province, for "the general benefit of the people of the territory" and not that of the local Bakweri, Balong, Bakossi, Mbonge, Bakundu etc. in whose areas the plantations situate. The argument therefore is formidable in favour of the view that if all these other peoples' lands in the form of plantations etc. were being used for the "general benefit" what moral or legal reason was

there for the Bali to sit on so much land while their fellow Cameroonian neighbours starved?

The West Cameroon Government commissioned me to meet the Bali to commence the first round of negotiations aimed at finally obtaining from them land for the suffering and land locked Chomba. The reason for my selection was not only because I was Secretary of State in charge of Lands and Surveys, but also because and perhaps the more so, since I do not belong to any of the Grassland tribes of the Bamenda area.

Owing to my neutral background, I thus stood the best chance of being accepted as an impartial emissary by the suspecting Bali. I had a personal reason why I eagerly accepted to take on the mission to Bali. Over the years I owed a silent debt of gratitude to the Bali, not only for the hospitality I enjoyed from them during the multiparty days, but also because I have a number of friends from Bali with whom I was closely attached. Here therefore was my chance to strike a twin-headed blow in the interest of the Chomba on one hand, and the Bali on the other. A parcel of land lay well within the convenience of the Bali to give from their vast land holdings, and for which a handsome compensation awaited them from the West Cameroon Government.

As a matter of fact, it was here, on the question of compensation where the Bali stood on solid ground for a high bid, since we were all anxious to appease them at any cost. This is where I virtually held an open cheque for them as compensation for some land for their suffering Chomba neighbours.

In order to obtain a clear picture on the ground, of the area we would be talking about in Bali, my entourage and I stopped at the exit point from Chomba on the Bamenda/Bali road, and walked briskly from there to Chomba village. We took exactly six minutes to cover the distance and we just turned round and walked back to our waiting cars. The convoy then quietly rolled into Bali to meet F on Galega II with his council. They were already seated, waiting for us, and after the opening courtesies we commenced the meeting. The sitting arrangement was interesting. The Government delegation led by me and including S.D.O. J.N. Ntui, the heads of the Gendarmerie, Police and Army, Bamenda, with a few aides sat on the right side of the hall. On our left sat the Bali Council, while in front of all, on a raised platform sat Fon Galega II in his flowing multi-coloured robes.

S.D.O. Ntui opened, with a few introductory remarks on the

purpose of the meeting and I was given the floor. I rose and addressed the Fon and his Council on the purpose of my mission in a written statement in which I most delicately chose my words. My request was simple and convenient for the Bali to grant. A small land corridor was needed to enable Chomba obtain an outlet to the Bamenda-Bali road and to do their simple farming. For this, Government was prepared to pay full compensation to Bali. I had come to commence negotiations on the matter. With me was a plan of the area concerned, so that we could study the details of what we would be discussing from that plan and if need be, we could proceed to the spot. I made a passionate appeal to them to sympathise with the lot of the Chomba who were still head loading their produce etc. to the Bamenda-Bali road, whereas a road covering a bare six minutes walk to the Bamenda-Bali road could change all their fortunes by linking them with the rest of Cameroon. I reminded them of our liberal use of land in our friendly country, and that in Kumba where I came from, there is a whole Bali Quarter. When I finished my brief address, I called on "His Highness and the Bali Council" to respond.

The Fon rose to speak. A giant of a man, standing a clear six feet plus off the ground, Fon Galega II was magnificently built. In his flowing multi-coloured robes he looked the classic example of an African chief indeed. He steadied himself and began to speak in Bali. An interpreter put over to us what he meant to convey. It did not take more than a few sentences for us to understand that the Fon was very angry. Why did we come to talk again about Bali land. He rejected the proposal out of hand, and he tore the plan which he had been handed and which he was still holding, and threw it to the ground. Then he did something silly for his age and weight. He tried to kick the plan away with his right foot. As he did this, his foot slipped and the great mass of Fon Galega II nearly fell. He just managed to steady himself upon his feet. We all breathed relief; for no one of us knew what custom of the sensitive Bali we would have broken to cause their Fon crash down before them. Then at the climax of his rage, Fon Galega raised a song, which was instantly answered by his assembled council. I was later told that it was a war song, but here again the Fon slipped, because traditional law forbids war whether in acts or in threat against an emissary who is only bearer of a message.

S.D.O. Ntui on the advice of his military aides whispered to me to close the meeting. Perhaps what saved further unpleasantness was that

I did not know that Fon Galega's song was a song of war. I have a strong feeling that had I fully understood the meaning of the song, it would have hardened me to resist such threats of war. But I did not, and so I listened to the advice of the S.D.O. and calling for order, I rose and made a few brief remarks. I had come to them with an offer from the West Cameroon Government, and I was leaving them to examine the matter and let Government hear from them later. I then closed the meeting without further ceremony, and I, and my entourage filed out.

I left Bali a sad man. It was clear to me that the Fon had floundered. One Councillor, I think it was Prince Winston Fonyonga, did not like the Fon's reply and tried to revive the discussion. He was cried down by the Bali as we left the hall. I have not been to the place since, and the memory of that painful visit haunts me to this day. I'll never forget my ill-fated mission to Bali and how an angry Fon threw the chance of winning peace with his neighbour and bagging millions into the bargain from the Cameroon Government. It would be recalled that at the end of the Bali-Widikum fighting in 1953, the Bali won some 10,000 pounds awarded them against Widikum. Had my visit been welcomed, they may easily have bagged more from a Government anxious to pay anything for peace amongst the peoples of the Fatherland.

The Bafut Succession of 1969

The year 1969 rolled by and early in its path I must record an event of great moment and public interest that rocked the very foundation of one of our ancient chiefdoms Bafut. Achirimbi II, Fon of Bafut, and a colourful figure amongst the natural rulers of our land, passed away. An impressive figure, tall and upright, Achirimbi II had ruled Bafut with a firm hand virtually through most of the half century of the British stay in the Cameroons. When he died in 1969, his British friends had handed the territory over to an Independent Cameroon for less than a decade, and in Bafut where he had become a legend, his death created a vacuum that could hardly be effectively filled. As a matter of fact the question of his successor immediately threw a problem into the hands of the West Cameroon Government. Who was going to be the next Fon of Bafut? The Prime Minister was no stranger to the complicated rituals surrounding succession to the throne of a

Fon, and so he speedily despatched three of his Ministers from Buea. They were to watch the situation and guide the succession proceedings in the interest of peace and good government and to report to the Prime Minister. Messrs. B.T. Sakah, J.C. Wanzie and N.N. Mbile, left Buea for Bamenda where we set up lodgings. The S.D.D. Bamenda Mr.' James Ntui, a former schoolmate, was most helpful and next day we conveyed to Bafut to commence business.

The Chieftdom of Bafut lies northwest of the sprawling inland city of Bamenda, sometimes referred to as Mankon. But actually, Bamenda is not just Mankon. It includes Nkwen, Mankon, Bamenda- Nkwe, and Akum. From the historic Bamenda Fortress where we camped, the city spreads for almost as far as the eye can see in the valley down at the end of its steep heights. Bafut lies thirteen miles to the north-west, on a lower altitude, resulting in its warmer climate and the luxuriant growth there of the stately oil palm. The most striking feature of Bafut is the Fon's Palace not far from the Bafut market. It stands bare and ancient; a great walled complex encircling a large cluster of buildings (zinc roofed sun-dried block walls) all housing the royal train of scores of men, women and children. This had to be, judging from the fact that the late Fon had nearly four score wives, and more than a hundred children and many grand children besides.

The late Fon's inner courtroom, where he generally presided over the sessions of the traditional Qwifon⁶ was prepared for the consultations that we the Ministers from Buea conducted for five tedious days. The S.D.O. Bamenda, the Senior Superintendent of Police and the Commandant of the Gendarmerie as well as the head of the Army in Bamenda formed part of the ad hoc commission. We sat from morning till early evening each day listening to the opinions of those concerned in our attempt to answer one question "who do you prefer to be the new Fon. John Fombe or George Niba?" These two were the final candidates who stood for the stool out of the male children of the late Fon. John Fombe was fifteen, a third year student in Bali Protestant College (CPC), while George Niba was thirty, and a tutor at Bonjongo Roman Catholic Secondary School. George had done a three-year course in education in the United Kingdom and

⁶ Qwifon is the traditional council of family heads which serves as the top inner circle of the courtiers who daily advice the Fon.

stood out the more popular choice amongst the sixty-four widows and the over sixty children of the late Fon interviewed. He also carried the bigger support amongst the Bafut elders and amongst the Bafut councillors. John Fombe carried majority support from the Qwifon who were regarded as the traditional king makers.

A Red Note Book: Then above all, John had his name inscribed in a red note book that was tendered and claimed to have been written by the late Fon himself. Much interest had centred on this Red Notebook, a small notebook with only one of the covers surviving. The writing was in pencil and the letters must have been inscribed by a shaky hand that did not spell “successor” right.

In the chieftdom as a whole nothing appeared to move, as the otherwise agile population of Bafut just milled around in silent whispering groups, waiting to hear the great news everyone was expecting the name of the new Fon. Was it “John or Jos”? One old lady, a widow of the late Fon during our interview was asked why she preferred “Jos.” She said he is of age. He will be able to hold the world. To this grand dame, Bafut was the world. Another, a pretty young woman carrying her baby on her back answered, “How long can I wait for a boy to grow and be my next husband? Have I not waited enough for his father?” “But” countered a voice from the Commission, “the Qwifon wants John. What will you do?” The woman snapped back, “Let the Qwifon stay in the palace and marry the boy. I will go back to my father’s house.” Another old lady, confronted with the opinion of the Qwifon on her choice, answered, “If the Qwifon has said so, what can I say. Have I else where to go than this place?”

On the 5th day, the Commission rose, and as I was returning to Bamenda, I chose to stop at the palace of the Fon of Mankon where I met my late friend Henry Usim. He too had called to greet the F on, but when he saw me, he shouted, “Beau congratulations! congratulation!” I looked at him in surprise and asked, “Henry, why are you congratulating me, have I been appointed Prime Minister?”

“No,” he answered, “You are the new Minister of Education” “So Wanzie is out?” He nodded, “Then Henry, I will be the next to go.” He didn’t take me serious on the last point and countered, “Well even if you shall go, you shall have served as Minister of Education.” I coolly conceded, but in a quieter moment I told Henry that Joseph Wanzie was one of my best friends of all the ministers. His departure

touched me deeply and my appointment did not console me, but since I had no choice, we took the appointment for what it was worth.

Premier Muna's Government – 1968



The next day, the name of John Fombe was announced as the Fon of Bafut, with the title of Abumbi II and rioting exploded in the town. The mobile police stepped in and finally brought things to order, but not without some harsh action. One man lost a leg in some shooting that had to be resorted to, in order to establish peace and order for the young Fon to take the reins. In time, wise counsel prevailed, and full order was restored. George Niba and his brother reconciled and the people of Bafut enjoyed peace again. George Niba received the title of “Ndingfon” (the equivalence of Prime Minister) and paid homage to his younger brother.

I returned to Buea from Bafut as the new Secretary of State for Primary Education, West Cameroon, and set to work to acquaint myself with the requirements of my new responsibility. My departmental experts were on hand to put me through the necessary paces, but I was anxious myself to introduce fresh impetus into some elements of our education system in which I passionately believed. So, during my maiden visit to the education institutions in the territory under my charge, I presented a paper on “A New Page in our Education” which was an expose on my ideas of how the shape of our post independence system of education ought to be.

In brief, my idea was and is that the system of education modelled in the British colonial era, and on which lines we mainly run, falls short of our post independence needs as a country. The colonial education needs were smaller, and centred around the production of the limited needs of staffing the existing colonial services teachers to run the few schools, clerks to keep records in the few offices, policemen to keep the peace, messengers to deliver mail, etc. As the needs for literacy were few, the system was naturally shaped to take care of this, although there was gradual expansion as the services grew. This accounts for the small number of schools in the territory and the existence up to the early thirties, of only the Normal College for training teachers at Buea as the highest institution of learning in the territory. It later moved to Kake, Kumba, and was renamed Kake Teachers Training Centre.

The missionary bodies delved into the opening of schools principally to expand their missionary work through literacy to enable Christian converts read the Bible to understand Christian teaching. So the content of colonial education was limited to the few needs of the time; but now with the arrival of independence and general enlightenment, a new situation forced us in providing a system more adapted to the needs of the day. Thus ran my theme.

I record my disappointment at the cool reception of my message by those who ran the system. The reason: I was speaking a language too blatantly true perhaps. As an advocate for change of the system, it was like a preacher of a new order amongst the “Pharisees and

Scribes" steeped in the doctrines of the past. I had no doubt though, that my audience understood the problem, but their dilemma appears to be where their expertise was going to stand in the new message, and how they were going to overcome the obvious obstacles in the battle for change. Yet, it was only a matter of postponing the battle day, for we were simply deceiving ourselves if we did not accept the need to radically embrace change in our education system. The colonial system of education which had been for a select few, was now grossly out of tune when practically 80% of our children, male and female, now went to school.

Watching a march past on our public holidays, one saw thousands of boys and girls in our teeming schools. The number of children in one divisional centre alone could easily have equalled the entire population of school children, in say 1930, in the entire British Cameroons. If all we did was to take out all these future inhabitants of Cameroon from the villages and homesteads only to teach them to read, write, type, learn a bit of geography and history and then turn them out to the country with paper certificates, we had to admit that we were not facing up to the realities and the harsh situation dictated by the needs of today's society. What was the value of an education system that did not prepare the young for the appropriate needs of the society, and to train them to effectively play their part in it, building on the foundation of their fathers? Was it not painfully true that a large number of our school leavers came out of school having not learnt even how to repair the thatch roofs of their parents' traditional huts? Then finding they could not even happily live with their parents again, drifted to the towns to create and/or increase the social problems that now beset our urban communities? What was the use for parents spending their entire meagre earnings to pay fees for children who spent years in typing schools that went in the name of colleges? Yes, only for these children to finally drift out and constitute the dregs of the society for they had learnt nothing effective in our traditional life, nor that of the new age? Failing in between, they end up worse than those who stayed at home and simply learnt the art and skills of the days of our fathers.

In my role as a Secretary of State for Education, West Cameroon, my job was far from complete, for it served us little, only to follow the beaten track of maintaining the status quo; turning out children from our out-worn mould of education on the colonial pattern. This was

because the teaching and clerical jobs that this was meant to serve had virtually dried out. The handful of clerks, teachers, policemen, soldiers and warders that we, once a while, recruited were hardly enough reward for our efforts. Too many fell by the wayside, too many ended nowhere. No, the establishment of a number of technical schools and colleges was hardly enough of a palliative. So, the problem lingered on, as we progressed into our post independent era, when many of our targets still found us far behind schedule. To my mind our education problem in Cameroon had only been increased by the over centralisation consequent upon the abolition of the old Federal system of government.

The Tanjong Committee of Investigation

In November 1971 as Secretary of State for Primary Education, I was granted one month leave, which I chose to spend in Britain and West Germany where I intended to look closely at what their education authorities there were doing in the field of Aptitude Testing and Teacher Training. The British Council willingly arranged a tour for me to cover a number of schools around London to see matters on the ground. I had certainly agreed with Professor Levin the Israeli Ambassador to Cameroon, that “Better a good tailor, than a bad doctor.”

In Teacher Training we were in Southern Cameroons clearly moving away from the old policy of teachers beginning from being Pupil Teachers first, before being trained to be professional teachers. Surely, it was better and more realistic to train a person right away as he/she left school to be a teacher rather than the out-dated system of employing a school-leaver for years first as Pupil Teacher before sending him/her for training to be a teacher years later. Clearly it appeared even more absurd, to continue with the old system even when secondary school leavers now pouring out provided handy good material to train right away. Why not train teachers straight as they left school?

This new thinking had received a great boost from what had been accepted as the “Mengot Formula” of a 5-year crash course which combined General Education subjects and Teacher Training, ending the student with both the GCE “O” level and the Teacher Grade II certificate. Indeed, many even pressed on to get their “A” level and

proceeded ahead. With secondary school leavers pouring out of colleges the policy of Pupil Teacher before Teacher Training was certainly getting out of date, since these secondary school leavers were better prepared than their earlier counterparts who had been armed with only the First School Leaving Certificate, as their basic education.

The two subjects of my interest as I talked to education authorities in Britain and West Germany (Aptitude Testing and Teacher Training) absorbed much of my 30-day visit though I found myself only touching them skin deep. It was my hope to initiate a Department of Aptitude Testing in the Ministry of Education on my return home. In Teacher Training, it had become clear and virtually beyond any argument that the policy truly relevant now, was to train before appointing one a teacher and so end the era of Pupil Teachers. Actually from my daily "discussion with British education authorities, I had gained the impression that in Britain the policy firmly stood to train teachers first, before launching them out to teach.

On the question of content of education, work was already on for Tanzania and other comers from former British colonial territories to review their syllabuses in order to adapt education to the new needs of these newly independent countries that had emerged. It was manifest everywhere that post independence education for most African and developing countries now served a bigger spread than its colonial period's limited purpose of providing the limited number of teachers, clerks, policemen, accountants etc. for their service. After independence, since practically every child went to school, education was now for the mass to cover everywhere and almost everyone.

In my three weeks in Britain and nine days in West Germany, I tried to see and learn as much as I possibly could in four weeks. Many of the papers and documents covering my interest were mailed straight to my Cameroon address, reaching home long after my return. In Hanover, it took me and Dr. Meboka who was my host, some two hours to locate No. 2 Bismarck Strasse, an education institution, in order to meet a Professor Walters. When we finally found the learned Professor, my first question to him was why the street named after the great Bismarck was so difficult to find in the city of Hanover. The Professor's explanation was that Hanover had regarded Bismarck a conqueror and so had named a very small street with only a few houses after him. I missed visiting Berlin but spoke to the Cameroon Ambassador in Bonn by telephone excusing my inability to visit him. I

however saw a good deal of parts of Northern Germany including fabulous Hamburg and the near eight miles of villas and mansions constituting the homes of the famous Hamburg merchants. I must not close the story of my visit to Germany without specially acknowledging Dr. Elias Meboka and his wife Catherine for their wonderful nine-day care and sponsorship. Their one-year-old son named Noto was the first black man born in Neustat Hanover. Everywhere we went the best introduction of Dr. Meboka was, “this is the father of No to.”

On my return home, I was telling my uncle Pa Tapea of my visit to Germany at last. When he asked me if I visited Berlin and my answer was no, he sighed and said “then you must go again, you have not seen the real place.” My uncle was an ex-German plantation overseer who had heard enough of Berlin in his days, to regard no where else. His reaction has always kept me wondering if he was right that without seeing Berlin, I had not seen Germany.

Only days to my return home as I landed back in Britain from my West Germany wanderings, late M.M. Noto who was winding up his legal studies in London, handed me a copy of the *Cameroon Outlook*. It had been sent from home by my late friend, Henry Anjeh Usim, and carried the news that on 13th November 1971, exactly twenty-four hours after I flew off from Tiko Airport via Douala to London, the Prime Minister, Mr. S. T. Muna had instituted a Committee of Investigation into the affairs of the Secretariat of Education, West Cameroon, with the following terms of reference:

“Authority and Purpose: By letter No. PM0.474/S.8/V.2/288 of 13th November 1971, the Committee of Investigation was constituted by His Excellency the Prime Minister of West Cameroon. The purpose of the Committee was to conduct a thorough investigation into allegations of anomalies and irregularities which had been committed in the process of recruiting students into the Grade III Emergency Courses at R.P. C. Mutengene and T. T. C. Kumba. By letter No. PM0.474/ S:8/V.2/231, the terms of reference of the Committee and other relevant portions of letter No. PM0.474/8.8/V.2/288 of November is.” 1971 were amended to include the Emergency Course at P. T. T. c., Batibo.

Composition of The Committee of Investigation In compliance with paragraph 2 of letter No. PMO.474/S.8/ V.2/231 of 13th November 1971, the committee comprised the following:

Mr. E. Tanjong

Secretary-General, Prime Minister's Office - Chairman

Mr. J. T. Nchamukong - Secretary-General, Secretariat of State for Public Service - Member - General Secretary, West Cameroon Union of Teachers – Member.

In accordance with the second portion of the same paragraph 2, Mr. J.K. Barah, Education Officer (Planning) in the Secretariat of Primary Education, was appointed to serve as Secretary to the Committee.

The Terms of Reference of The Committee were as follows:

- i. To investigate, establish the truth and make recommendations on the manner in which students were selected for admission into the Emergency Courses organised in R.P. C. Mutengene, G. T. T. C. Kumba and P. T. T. C. Batibo;*
- ii. To investigate, establish and make appropriate - observations on when each of the Emergency Courses commenced officially and when each student was admitted to the course;*
- iii. To investigate and establish whether or not there is enough class room and enough living accommodation for students presently undergoing the courses;*
- iv. To produce statistics which would show clearly the following information about students attending the Emergency Course in each of the colleges:*
 - a. Administrative Division of origin.*
 - b. Tribe*
 - c. Length of teaching experience.*
 - d. Sponsoring Agency or Employer.*
 - e. Last school in which each student taught and date of leaving it.*
 - f. Educational qualifications.*
 - g. Marital status*
- v. To produce detailed statistics showing the number of students admitted into the Emergency Courses during the last four years;*
- vi. To obtain from the authorities of the colleges concerned and from any other relevant sources any documents and papers relative to the terms of reference of the Committee.” Mr. J.N. Tamen*

The Tanjong Committee was set up on 13th November 1971 and ended on 2nd December 1971, a period of 19 days and came out with the following findings and recommendations which directly affected the Secretariat of State.

“Pressure from the Secretariat:

It was noted that there seemed to have been some undue pressure being exerted

on the Education Department by the Secretariat of Primary Education. As a result of this situation the Education Department appears to have been rendered incapable of implementing its own regulations. See document 1 attached to Annex One.

This pressure seems to have seeped through the Department of Education to the G. T. T. C Kumba. It is for this reason that the admission of Miss A WOH Susan Mary and Miss FONTEM Grace had to be forced down the throat of Mr. Efesoa the then Principal of the College who was accused of "flouting authority" in this matter. These were candidates with one and two GCE O' level papers respectively. Besides, they had never taught before and hence could not have been admitted in normal circumstances. See Documents 12 and 13 attached to Annex.

In the case of Mr. Fonso's transfer, the Committee after having considered both Mr. Fonsa's memorandum and the Director of Education's explanatory letter, was inclined to believe that Mr. Fonso's transfer was not unconnected with his stand on the admission of more students into the Emergency Course at G. T. T. C Kumba. This then can be considered as another instance of pressure.

Recommendation

Considering Mr. Efesoa's letter Nos. 1TC/303/Vol.II/724 of 7th September 1971; and 1TC:3/SCF/A/85 of 15th September 1971; and considering the Director of Education's letter No. CDE:14/Vol.I/69 of 13th September 1971, the Committee arrived at the conclusion that the admission of Miss A WOH Susan Mary and Miss FONTEM Grace was illegal under Gazette Notice No. 21. Vol. II of 22nd May 1971, and recommends that the two girls be dismissed from the Grade II Teachers' Course at G. T. T. C. Kumba."

I returned to Cameroon on 11th of December 1971. This was exactly nine days after the Tanjong Committee of Investigation had finished, on the 2nd of December 1971, their investigation into the affairs of my Ministry. So, in effect the Tanjong Committee of Investigation had been appointed the day after I left Buea for Britain and it folded up its investigation nine days before I landed back on Cameroon soil. In a letter I addressed to H.E. the Prime Minister S.T. Muna, dated 5th January, 1972, I submitted an eight page observation and comment on the findings of the Tanjong Committee of Investigation, the most relevant portions of which follow below. They are to be read along side the Committee's terms of reference to obtain the best effect.

Observation 1

The first point I wish to make is that like most affairs of a routine or general nature my services proceeded with the Emergency Course arrangement bringing me into the picture only (1) when they felt like consulting me on some policy or near policy point (2) when they were in doubt and wanted clarification and (3) when complaints were raised to me either at personal interviews or by petition. Otherwise when I am in the office I attend to files in my tray or to incoming mail by minuting to the Secretary General to take "appropriate or necessary action."

Observation 2

The second point and this relates to this year's Emergency Courses is that, the course of this academic year was going to be the last until further notice. This being the case there was a general feeling that all outstanding cases should as much as possible be cleared and any complaints that came to - my notice were promptly referred to the Secretary General or the Director of Education to investigate and treat. My attitude to complaints was influenced by two important considerations (1) the need to ensure that all deserving cases were given their chance, especially as it was going to be the last opportunity to many teachers, the men and women who in spite of their academic handicaps and limited remuneration have remained the patient standard bearers of our educational system while others trained. After the painful termination of some 2,000 of them, a move which greatly worried the West Cameroon Government to the extent that Exco directed that no retrenchments were to be undertaken without the approval of Government, I was particularly anxious and favourably disposed towards any idea that would salvage as many of these old teachers as possible, thus minimising tremendously, the impact on the

West Cameroon community of such mass retrenchment of teachers. I therefore regarded this last Emergency Course as a useful escape valve for the tension and unpleasant impact that retrenchment of Cameroonians on such an alarming 'scale would produce on themselves and on their families, especially in view of our extended family system. (2) The need to salvage for retention in the service of the cheaper group of teachers who in spite of their academic limitations were effective practical handlers of children and most convenient to our limited purses.

Observation 3

Where I have had doubt, I have generally consulted His Excellency the Prime Minister for advice and guidance over matters that I considered a little more than of a routine nature. At all times, I have depended on this method to handle my problems, I consult my services or move up to the Prime Minister when I still entertain doubt on what to do.

Observation 4

When as in the creation of a new centre at Kumba to accommodate some 66 teachers for whom the Director of Education could not find room at Mutengene and Batitbo, which I considered too much to decide with the Secretariat, I went with the Director of Education to consult His Excellency. At these personal interviews before His Excellency a list of points generally made more sense than one isolated item.

Observation 5

By the time the T.T.C.s were admitting students this year several events had overtaken us. One such event is that contrary to the situation before, we no longer were desperate or even keen to pressure teachers who had been trained to stick to teaching. As a matter of fact because of this situation the T.T.C.s are not bonding any teacher now and rather "adopt a flexible attitude regarding attendance of students at these centres, so that neither Government nor the students became too committed one way or the other." It became clear that we were gradually drifting to the era when teachers undergoing training in our T.T.C.s were going to end up with fending for themselves like other graduates of our Secondary and Grammar Schools, by seeking employment anywhere. In fact in our meeting with His Excellency on 4th September 1971, it was agreed that this matter will form the subject of a comprehensive memorandum to the Executive Council.

Observation 6

And this, Your Excellency, brings me to the admission to G.T.T.C. Kumba of the two girls Susannah M Awob and Grace Fontem, both graduates of Q.R.C. Okoyong, for which I accept responsibility. These two cases were exceptional cases and my judgement was that I was acting in the greatest national interest to refer these cases to the Director of Education for admission to the G.T.T.C. Sir, I shall treat the cases one by one, but permit me to make two observations of principle here:

1. My humble contention here is that this matter is outside the terms of reference of the Committee as appointed by His Excellency.' Unless we are to hold that the Committee was looking widely for anything even outside their authorised area of search; their investigation into this case fell outside their competence. See terms of reference i-vi.

2. Since this case concerned my name and office and involved the part I played in it, the Committee should have asked for my defence and explanation to the allegations made against me. It seems to me to say the least, unfair, that a Committee which investigates complaints against me and which has included its

verdict of such complaints in its findings and published report, did not consider it proper to give me the opportunity to defend myself and explain any allegations.

a) Susannah Mary Awob - age 19

She is native of Manya village in Ngolo-Batanga, the first and only girl in the entire Ngolo-Batanga clan to have successfully completed a Secondary School education. Born of poor village peasants this tenacious little girl astounded the Okoyong College authorities by her sheer will power and resolution to push ahead and acquire a college education. After struggling for years, she finally obtained a partial scholarship by the Ndian Council but owing to the poverty of her parents the other half of her fees could not be regular and she consequently attended classes for only parts of her years in the college. During her final year my attention was drawn to her case but actually she had lost too much time before I was approached. She got a daily paid holiday job at Buea in order to prepare for entry to the G.T.T.C. to qualify as a teacher. Knowing how much the failure or the success of this single girl could be crucial to women education in a whole tribe I encouraged her in her ambition to press on in order to become a teacher. I referred her case to the Director of Education who felt that she was fully qualified to do the teachers Grade II Course.

b) Grace Fontem

This is also a graduate of the Q.R.C. Okoyong. When this girl called for help, I had the benefit of advice from a ministerial colleague who assured me that all her life this girl wanted only to be a teacher. He had sponsored her education himself, and so I could not doubt the word of honour of a ministerial colleague, that the girl will stick to teaching as a career.

Hitherto Secondary School leavers did the teacher Grade II Course in twelve months but because of the need to ground them better, Secondary School leavers are now being asked to do the course in two years. When this is weighed against the fact that the five-year course students take their Grade II examination after only five years following their First School Leaving Certificate, it can be seen why a Secondary School Leaver who spent five years after her First School Leaving Certificate and an additional two years to do the Grade II Course cannot fairly be regarded as not being qualified to do the Grade II Course. While in England I visited the Stockwell College of Education, Bromley, Kent (a Teacher Training College). The entry qualification is a Secondary Education.

Observation 7

I regarded these two cases exceptional and the Director of Education was fully satisfied with their qualification to do the course. These are the views of Mr. D.N.

Ekole, the Director of Education, on the two cases:

"When the two girls: Grace Fontem and Susannah Mary Anoh who were seeking admission into the Grade II Course, asked the Secretary of State for help: he in turn asked me whether they were qualified, this is what I said:

"A recent Gazette publication would require the fulfilment of one condition – teaching experience.

The Education Secretaries asked that this condition be included, I was not party to it. I cannot recommend any administrative measure that had no professional backing. No country to my knowledge insisted that all secondary school leavers teach before going to a Teacher Training College. This has no professional significance. I did protest but the Secretariat still 'included this as one of the "economy" measures recommended. Later the Secretary of State and one of his colleagues asked me to send the two girls to G.T.T.C. which I did."

It is necessary for me to explain one important point. The decision to insist on previous teaching for all those who wanted to do the Grade II Course, was from a complaint of the Baptist Mission Education Secretary who felt that it was necessary to include this condition so that one would be sure that those who were trained should first show evidence of their determination to continue as teachers, since so many teachers left for other jobs after receiving training.

However, by the time the T.T.Cs were admitting students for the current courses we had been completely overtaken, by events and our thinking was directly opposite to the old fears. It will be recalled that this was the period when we faced a virtual crisis. Some 2,000 teachers had been retrenched, some 700 trained teachers were pouring out of the Colleges, and there were some 2,000 student teachers still in the pipeline. The problem now is what to do with so many teachers being trained since their number is greater than the vacancies to absorb them. Any teacher who leaves teaching to work elsewhere is in fact helping to lighten our burden. It has therefore become necessary not to bond teachers since none could ensure their automatic employment, as in the days before, and to maintain flexibility on the question of admissions and so use the present T.T.Cs as much as possible (until we convert some of them to other uses) as training ground even for those who may not necessarily be automatically employed as teachers in West Cameroon. It is not unlikely that if a search were made in the entire T.T.Cs in West Cameroon more cases may surface where secondary school leavers straight from college may be doing the Grade II Course precisely as these two girls. This is owing to the new thinking that events had forced all to engage in the new situation that was fast unfolding. Until we dismantle some of our present twelve teacher training colleges, my view is that trainees at these institutions will gradually be treated like their colleagues in the

twenty Secondary and Grammar Schools in West Cameroon, where students obtain their training and on graduation, look for any employment on their own. I had already indicated that it is my intention to submit a comprehensive memorandum to Council on this problem.

Observation 8 Committee Oversteps Authority

The finding and recommendation on the two secondary school leavers are on matters which the Committee had no authority to investigate since the inquiry concerned only the Grade III Emergency Courses. Even when Batibo Centre which was not at first included in the investigation was later considered for inclusion, His Excellency the Prime Minister approved the amendment of relevant portions of letter No. PM0.474/S.8/ V.2/288 of is: November 1971, "to include the Emergency Course at P.T.T.C. Batibo" see page 2 of Report D Procedure. If the Committee wanted to include a wider investigation of the Secretariat of Primary Education, on everything concerning admission of all types of students, and the relationship between the Secretariat and the Department of Education, I humbly submit that it was the place of the Committee to have sought and obtained the clearance of the Prime Minister to delve into such other matters. In that case of course, the Secretary of State whose administration was being investigated would have deserved to be heard and defend himself. Also the constitutional propriety and authority of the Committee as constituted to probe the discharge of his duties by a Secretary of State would have had to be fully examined. And the probe would have covered all the colleges doing Grade II. not just the case of the two girls at G.T.T.C. Kumba. But now, your Excellency, the Committee finding no authority for going beyond its terms of reference, and in fact having exhausted its authorised limits, see terms of reference i-vi, it arrogated to itself the power to investigate the discharge of my constitutional duties and to issue verdicts that it had no authority to do. See Committee Report General Remarks pages 13/14: Pressure from Secretariat Page 14 Recommendations 1, 2 - page 15. One may appreciate the temptation of the Committee to carpet a Secretary of State, especially with such an attractive story as the admission of two girls through the intervention of the Secretary of State for Primary Education but I cannot accept that the Committee could be justified to take upon itself a mandate it did not receive.

My humble submission is that all such investigation on matters and the recommendation thereon upon which the Committee had no authority to investigate are ipso facto unauthorised. If such authority were sought to investigate into this wider field, His Excellency in considering the request would naturally have borne in mind the competence of a Committee of Civil Servants pure and simple to inquire into the discharge by a Secretary of State of his constitutional duties without the

Secretary of State being invited to say a single word in defence of himself, and of his actions, and when the Secretary of State was in fact not in the country during the entire period of investigation (November 15th to December 2nd 1971). I left Cameroon for London on the 12th November 1971 and returned on the 11th of December 1971. My final and humble submission here Sir, is that His Excellency seeks legal advice on this point in view of its constitutional implications.

Observation 9

The Committee in its findings and recommendations has made certain assumptions that must be questioned:

(i) The first assumption is the question of qualification of students to enter training courses. The Director of Education who is the competent authority says that they were qualified. Educational Authorities even in England hold that a Secondary School Leaver is fully qualified to enter a teacher training college to do the training course. In West Cameroon until recently secondary school-leavers entered and did the course in only one year. In order to ground them better, secondary school leavers now do the course in two years. Whose verdict about entry qualification should I have accepted, that of the Director of Education who is the competent technical adviser and authority on education in West Cameroon or that of the Committee of Investigation comprising men who certainly cannot claim to be more competent than the Director of Education in his field? It seems to me that the Committee is confusing between what is basic academic qualification for entry to do the course as against conditions set for entry.

(ii) The second point on which the Committee has based certain questionable conclusions concerns the question of "Government Policy." One therefore may ask what in fact is "Government Policy"? Is it what the Executive Council approves or is it anything that the Director of Education may do at anyone time? The answer may either be one or both. If we accept that Government Policy amounts to decisions properly approved by the Executive Council then it must be admitted that the Annex 4(a)-(i), an annex of the Report headed "Outline of Origin and Policy of the Grade III Emergency Course" drawn up in 1965 by the then Director of Education cannot properly be called "Government Policy" to the extent of binding the

Secretary of State for Primary Education hand and foot in 1971 unless they were EXCO decisions. First of all those notes drawn up by the Director of Education were never brought to my notice as no occasion arose for me to see them. Even if they were brought to my notice although it is six years since they were compiled, the spirit underlying their implementation appears to me today to be generally the same as when they were drawn. A few changes like lowering the

number of years may be pointed at, but in the main the spirit continues.

My humble contention is that notes as those drawn up by the Director of Education six years ago may constitute a useful guide to the Secretary of State in 1971 in directing affairs under his charge, but I fail to understand that. the Secretariat of State can be said to have breached "Government Policy" because it deviates from some detail of notes regarding any particular question under his charge, from what someone wrote in the Department under him some six years before. Especially where the present Director of Education who is the highest professional authority, the Secretary General, the principal Adviser to the Secretary of State and the Secretary of State himself are fully agreed on the interpretation of a matter, can notes or proposals written by a former Director of Education be regarded inviolate to those on the reins. That is why I find it difficult to appreciate an allegation of breach of "Government Policy" because some items of the notes by a former Director of Education have been modified, except if it was an Exco conclusion. Your Excellency, if Secretaries of State were strictly bound to adhere to notes written years ago by former Directors of their Ministries, I would not think that a single Secretary of State or officer in any authority can escape blame by any inquiry."

Inescapable Conclusions

When one looks at the Tanjong Committee of Investigation, its contradictions and its improprieties, one inescapable conclusion emerges. It could not be an accident that so many principles were trampled upon and so many wrongs extolled. Why did the Prime Minister approve my leave to Europe and yet exactly the next day after I left Buea, he signed his letter of 13th November 1971 instituting an Inquiry to investigate me and my Ministry by civil servants chaired by his chief scribe. Why did he not ensure that I was heard by the judges and face my accusers? I am sure that Mr. Muna would have better used my ministerial colleagues if he had meant well, or a Judicial Commission if he had wished to be fair to me in the investigation.

Then, look at the findings and remarks of the Committee. The Secretary of State was criticised for breaching education policy drawn up by Mr. Shu, former Director of Education. Can any thing be more absurd? Between a sitting Minister and a former Director, who is responsible for the policy of the Ministry? Certainly not the Director, a former Director. The Tanjong Committee of Investigation made

Director S.N. Shu the policy maker and Secretary of State N.N. Mbile the policy breaker.

The Tanjong Committee of Investigation found against me that I as Secretary of State was interfering with the education institutions under my Ministry because I sent two Okoyong graduates to be admitted to T.T.C. Kumba to be trained as teachers. Can anything be more ridiculous? Who is better empowered to encourage persons for study than the Minister in charge? If all who act do so as agents of the Minister, how can the principal be wrong and his agent right to act on the same issue? The Tanjong Committee of Investigation found the principal guilty for acting over the authority of his agent?

The Irony of Fate

So, at the end of the Tanjong Committee of Investigation, there was some three weeks after my return from Europe, a one-man reshuffle of Mr. Muna's cabinet with my removal as Minister. Mr. Tanjong became a Governor. I do not know what the other members of his Committee got, but with time every fox including Mr. Muna went back to its hole. Several fulfilments however came to pass. The first had been my own prophesy to my late friend Henry Anjeh Usim, that after J.N. Wanzie, I would be the next to go. I was next indeed. The second had been that at last Mr. Muna redeemed his vow expressed to me in "his bedroom in 1968, when informing me that he had given me a chance to serve in his cabinet. He had ended, "but the slightest mistake, you are out." Indeed, he had waited from 1968 to 1972, and finding no "slightest mistake," may have invented one.

Could it have been a silent snare,
Well set for years for the day to come,
To find me failing in my nation's call?
So, why not invent this surer one,
Behind my back a world away,
Where judge and jury were the same,
To ensure this time, no safe escape.

Along the way, many plans may have floundered, but this one caught and an unforgiving heart registered its score. Permit me dear reader to end this part of my story with this personal account. While in the city of Hanover, Dr. Elias Meboka and I went out on a final shopping spree. Elias bought me a two piece suit. Thinking of my own

dear ones back home, I bought Mr. S.T. Muna a shirt for thirty-four marks. A shirt fit for a Prime Minister to wear. At London's Marks and Spencer, I bought Madam Elizabeth Muna a beautiful pullover (beige colour) and proudly presented these gifts on my return to Buea to Mr. Muna and his wife. Yet the hammer fell. Not even those gifts could save my neck. What a catalogue of my irony of fate.

I Lose another Friend

Little did I know as I landed on Cameroon soil again, that I had sad news awaiting me in the strange death of my life long friend, Henry Anjeh Usim. I had met Usim in 1940, in Calabar where we were both first year students in secondary school; he at West African People's Institute (W.A.P.I) and I in the Hope Waddle Training Institute. Together we often travelled between Ndian and Calabar during holidays on the Pamol launches or in canoes which were the only means of transport between these towns. After our college careers, our friendship grew stronger, and in 1950, he was the best man at my marriage. When I got home on the night of Saturday November 11th, 1971, my wife could hardly muster courage to break the sad news to me. Henry had been killed on Tuesday 8th November, in the creeks off Bamusso, in an incident when he was part of a party chasing sea marauders from Nigeria. I was thrown into deep mourning for Henry had become virtually part of me. I need hardly say that I lost the Christmas of 1971.

My Exit

It was early 1972, and Mr. Muna the Prime Minister had travelled to Monrovia for a conference. On the day of his return we his Ministers as usual drove down to Douala to welcome him and then later saw him off at the airport on his way to Yaounde to report to the President. Meanwhile as the Yaounde plane was expected, we spent the time together in the Minister's Rest House Douala. Here we listened to the Prime Minister's story of his visit, and then turned to general conversation, exchanging jokes and laughing away. Then came the

hour and we all convoyed to the airport, the leading car sounding its siren as our limousines swept along. From the airport the plane soon left for Yaounde with the Prime Minister while we returned to Buea.

The next day was a Saturday, and I was still in my office working on some papers with a secretary when the telephone rang. I picked up the receiver and found it was Dan Ekole, the Director of Education at the other end. "Hello Sir" the voice called, "You are still on, it's past one" I answered that I was working on something important and had hardly noticed the time. "But" continued he "Have you heard the news?" "No" I replied. Then I found he had difficulty in coming straight to the point, but he continued, "There has been a government reshuffle, and we did not hear your name. Perhaps they made a mistake, but Mr. Nwalipenja has been appointed Minister." I replied, "No, it cannot be a mistake. Both Nwalipenja and I cannot be Ministers. I know I am out. Thank you for calling."

"At last the hammer falls," I mused. I turned to the secretary who was working with me. "Well my friend I am afraid I am no longer your Minister. There is a reshuffle of the Government and I have been dropped. You may take no more orders from me, except in a personal capacity, and you may stop typing that document for me." The young man was struck at the news, but offered to complete the job for me. As I waited for him to complete what he was doing, a car drove up and my friend Chief S.A. Arrey came into the office. I saw his face taut and sad, and I said after greetings, "Why S.A. are you looking so, is it because I have been removed?" "So you have heard?" he asked quietly. "Yes. Come, Chief let's go home and eat something. I am sure you are hungry like me."

We drove together and met my wife sewing. I went straight to the point, "Margaret we are out. Nwalipenja is the new Minister. The news was on at one o'clock, and Chief Arrey has come to console us. Let's have something to eat."

My wife, assisted by the boy set something for us to eat, and she returned to her sewing while Chief Arrey and I ate our meal and talked. My wife did not join us and I am sure she had lost her appetite for lunch. Yet I think Margaret bore the news bravely, and I thank her for that show of brave womanhood. It did a lot to help me contain that initial shock. In a matter of days we were back home to Kumba in our modest home where I quietly have lived since. What is there that man cannot bear where there is the will, and change is often but a moment's

pain.

At my exit, my friend M.N. Luma became Secretary of State for Education, and Mr. L.E. Nwalipenja became Secretary of State in the Prime Minister's Office. The Muna Government carried on the affairs of West Cameroon until the next major event as history was to show, took place. A significant innovation of Mr. Muna's rule was the introduction of the system of appointment of Ministers from non-parliamentarians. Hitherto, as far back as when it all began, our parliamentary system had been based on the Westminster model where ministers were appointed from members of Parliament. Now both Mr. Moutchia in 1968 and Mr. Nwalipenja in 1972 were made Ministers without first being elected members of the West Cameroon House of Assembly. The constitution had been amended in Yaounde to enable this to happen.

20th May 1972 "Peaceful Revolution."

Up to the year 1972, the country operated a Federal constitution which allowed the existence of two Federated States under the Federal Government in Yaounde. Then came the memorable day in the history of Cameroon when a silent revolution by President Ahmadou Ahidjo set aside the Federal Constitution in favour of a unitary one. The day, May 20th of each year is celebrated as a public holiday, for that is the day when both Federated States, their Governments and their legislative assemblies ceased to exist, in favour of a unitary system that now means one constitution, one government and one parliament for the Republic of Cameroon. Mr. S.T. Muna who was doubling as Prime Minister of West Cameroon and Vice President of the Republic served as Campaign Manager North West Province in the Referendum asking the Republic to adopt the Unitary System. That Province (North West) voted more than 90% to approve the Unitary System on 20th May 1972. We members of the one time Regional House of Assembly Buea packed our bags home as well as most of the Regional Secretaries of State and related functionaries. Messrs. Muna, Luma and Elangwe were appointed members of the Central Government in Yaounde. So ended our golden days of the West Cameroon House of Assembly at Buea, and if one were to inscribe the appropriate words on its epitaph, they would read, *House of Assembly Buea, Born October 26th 1954, Died 20th May, 1972.*

Some of the Actors in the “Cameroon Political Story”





Dr. Bernard Tindan
A leading intellectual turned politician, Minister in the days of Abidjo. He died in Canada where he had sought after his ministerial service.



Hon. Peter Fomum
He emerged as one of the progressive MPs from the N.W. Province, but died young at the height of his popularity.



Dr. Ntso Gwot
Leading advocate of Human Rights in Cameroon after service as Minister in the Central Government of Cameroon.



Hon. J. E. Ngale
Was Chairman N.W. Province during several years of military rule. He is now a Member CPDM Central Committee & Political Bureau.



Rt. Hon. Francis Nkwain
Once Minister Mines & Power, later Deputy Foreign Minister. Fought for Cameroonian entry into Commonwealth of Nations, Doubling of Kom.



Rt. Hon. Chief Ephraim Inoni
An acknowledged financial authority for years in the Ministry of Finance. Now Assistant Secretary General Presidency of the Republic.



Mrs. Gwot, E.
Bourlier
A leading women industrialist turned politician. Served as member National Assembly Yolo and CPDM Central Committee.



Rt. Hon. Ben Ben
A leading Artist. Served as Minister of Transport, Culture and Tourism. Now member of the Supreme Court and President of its Administrative Bench.



Dr. M. Eyidi Behey
A leading advocate of Cameroonian independence and unification. An UNO an acknowledged authority often invited to advise on.



Laban N. Njamne
Journalist-politician. Accompanied Zik on tour of Cameroon in 1946. Later joined the Daily Times.



Mr. E. K. Martin
Educationalist and Politician. Was Assemblyman S.C. and C.E.N.C. delegate to UNO as



Mrs. Chas E. Bunko
An educationalist turned politician. Was President, Advisor to Prime Minister Mangue. She died in

Natural Rulers



Chief Manga Williams
One of Cameroon's political leaders in the Richards Constitution days. Member Eastern House of Assembly, Ekitang and Legislative Council, Lagos.



Fon G.S. Gallega II
Was crowned in Eastern House of Assembly Ekitang when Bamenda was carved out of Cameroonian Province. One of the four senior sons of "Old Bamenda".



Chief S.M.L. Enechokoy
Born in the royal house of Boko, he proved a brilliant academic career that moved him the role of Chairman & Director, Lawyers, Appeal Cases, President and political leader.



Nelson V.E. Mokuere
Presented Chief of the Boko, Mokuere Division, N.E. Province. Is the First Vice Chief of Kumbo. A member of the C.F.M. Council Committee and Chairman of INTEL/CAM.



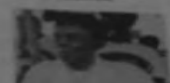
Nfor S.A. Ateky
Chief of Oning Many who gracefully combined politics, business and tradition. Member of Assembly, 1950 - 1958. A leading sage of the South West Chiefs Conference.



Chief V.N. Othio
Of the Bawanga Clan of the Oron tribe. Was member of the National Assembly Yawande. A strong president of the South West Chiefs Conference. He died in 1968.



Chief B.N. Nioke
A retired educationist, he provides that combination of education and tradition required of the modern African Natural Ruler. He enjoys mineral wealth in Boko and the South West Province.



Chief J.R. Mokuere
One of the senior chiefs in the S.W. Province. He leads the Mokuere Clan of the Oron tribe. Was member of the House of Chiefs West Cameroon.



Fon Fontem Njifua
(Fon of Fontem) First Vice President Chief of Boko, Libialem. A graduate of the Yawande University, he is the sitting president of the S.W. Chiefs Conference.



Fon Lekame
Supreme ruler of the Bamenda people in present Libialem Division. Was once member of Southern Cameroons House of Assembly.



Chief Death John Ngoh
Chief of Mankw, Kumbo. A distinguished hunter turned business man. He admirably combines tradition, business and politics.



Chief Ferguson Manga Williams of Limbe
Son of the celebrated Manga Williams of the Richards Constitution days. Is a chief of the Port city of Limbe.



Fon Achiemba II
Fon of Bafra.
One of the great
lords of the
Bamenda area
who saw much
of British rule.
He died in 1905.



Fon Ndi Kandi
Fon of Ndu, Nduki
Fon of Kono in 1905.
Fon of Kono in 1905.
Fon of Kono in 1905.
Fon of Kono in 1905.
Fon of Kono in 1905.
Fon of Kono in 1905.
Fon of Kono in 1905.
Fon of Kono in 1905.



Fon Ndinga II
He followed the
route to the
north by land
from Kono to
Laguna, returning
in 1905. He died
with 1905.
Elizabeth II.



Fon Achiemba III
A leading figure in the
Nduki region. One
of the great lords of
the area. He died in 1905.
Fon of Kono in 1905.
Fon of Kono in 1905.
Fon of Kono in 1905.
Fon of Kono in 1905.



Fon Mbat
Of Bafra. A
leading figure of
Bamenda area.
He was once a
member of S.C.
House of Chiefs.



Fon Achiemba II
He succeeded his
father Achiemba II
of Bafra in 1905.
He is a graduate
of the University
of Yerevan.



Fon Achiemba II
A Chief Nduki
who succeeded
to the throne of
Fon of Bafra.
He died in 1905.



Fon Nduki
A Senior Prince
Bamenda area.
He died in 1905.
He died in 1905.
He died in 1905.
He died in 1905.
He died in 1905.
He died in 1905.
He died in 1905.



Fon Geyong III
Fon of Bafra.
Succeeded his father
Geyong II as Fon of
Bafra. Member
C.P.D.M. Central
Committee. Succeeded
him in 1905.



Fon Nduki
Fon of Ndu, Nduki
Fon of Kono in 1905.
Fon of Kono in 1905.
Fon of Kono in 1905.
Fon of Kono in 1905.
Fon of Kono in 1905.
Fon of Kono in 1905.
Fon of Kono in 1905.



Fon Nduki
Fon of Ndu, Nduki
Fon of Kono in 1905.
Fon of Kono in 1905.
Fon of Kono in 1905.
Fon of Kono in 1905.
Fon of Kono in 1905.
Fon of Kono in 1905.
Fon of Kono in 1905.



Fon Nduki
Fon of Ndu, Nduki
Fon of Kono in 1905.
Fon of Kono in 1905.
Fon of Kono in 1905.
Fon of Kono in 1905.
Fon of Kono in 1905.
Fon of Kono in 1905.
Fon of Kono in 1905.

Students of political science must by now be examining the basis of the one party or national party system as advocated by several African States like Tanzania, Cameroon etc. I have personally been conducting my own examination of the basis for our present CPDM national party, not from an academic point of view, but from the political historical events in Cameroon where we had arrived at our national party the CPDM purely as result of political evolution and the spirit of consensus. As most of us in Cameroon well know, we started politics in this country using the white man's process of party politics of Government and opposition and after a period of costly experience we evolved the national party idea. If anything resembled foreign ideology in the CPDM, it certainly is not the idea itself which I like to style our CPDM consensus. For indeed what we had arrived at in Cameroon was a consensus of the various political parties and groups that had been organised on the white man's model of Government and Opposition.

Under the western oriented multi-party system our different personalities and groups formed political parties which then proceeded to seek political power and pay, for its elected members. More often than not, the groups held no clear-cut political ideology one distinct from the other, but they served their members to win elective posts and political power. Most Africans found that the quickest base for organising a political party was the tribal unit, where the leaders of the tribe often used old rivalries and new hopes and ambitions as effective tinder to whip up tribal support. We did remember that serious party politics began only when elections began and the quest for power arrived. So the bare truth in all the bitter and controversial party politics, was the quest for winning elective posts and political power. In short, party politics were a quick gamble to rise to the top of the society, both in pay and power for its members, especially when it was realised, as blacks advanced in education and in political awareness, that the white man was gradually giving way to them to take charge of their own affairs.

Each tribal group or groups organised a political plank and sought

for itself as much as possible for a share of the national cake, which the white man was now prepared to relinquish. When the vote came, the tribal leaders soon realised either that the number of heads within their tribe could win them what they sought, or if the number of heads could not do the job, alliances were created with other tribes willing to share the spoils with them. So indeed the purpose of all the political rivalry was to win elective office. Cameroon was no exception to this.

It was however soon realised that party politics was a costly affair. The bitterness whipped up, and the physical and fiscal cost of campaigns made the gamble a painful, uncertain venture. In fact it was even referred to as “political warfare” and warfare of any type has never been a pleasure even to the winner. Many who could not endure the uncertain fortunes and costly demands of party politics shrugged their shoulders and took the quieter more secure jobs that the civil and commercial colonial services offered, leaving politics to those who could stand its rough and tumble. At the conclusion of the campaigns, there were the losers and winners, but both were virtually all ruined financially and otherwise. Even friendships often broke up, and supporters of both sides fell apart in prolonged bitterness and discord long after elections. As elections were an unending process, always coming and going, the bitterness persisted in much of the society and even threatened the internal unity of the tribes in the case where rivals came out of the same ethnic group. Indeed as costly party politics developed, tribal units virtually split, through the instigation of rivalry within the tribe by its adversaries.

In the Southern Cameroons, later West Cameroon, the KNDP, CPNC and CDC finally emerged from the earlier groupings of KNC and KPP, and fought a bitter plebiscite that resulted in unification of Southern Cameroons with the former Cameroun under French Trusteeship. East of the Mungo, the D.C., the UPC and other groups like the Democratic Group had battled for supremacy, leaving the U.C. finally in control of the Government in Yaounde. When all stock was taken, it became clear that continuation of party political warfare on the white man's pattern in the now united Cameroon would in fact have meant that the unity and solidarity of the Cameroon nation itself could be shattered, and the fruits of independence and development of the people, suffer. Therefore, the sad result of all the wrangling was painful to all leaders of goodwill, and particularly to President Amadou Ahidjo on whom the mantle of leadership of Cameroon had fallen. We

agreed to end all the factional wrangling in the interest of National Unity in Cameroon. For only so, could we concentrate on the real development of our people. President Ahidjo's call in the late sixties to all Cameroonian political parties to come together in the interest of national unity, therefore fell on ears that were already weary of factional politics in the Republic, and by general consensus, all the parties on both sides of the Mungo came together under the banner of the Cameroon National Union (CNU) party. From the foregoing it is a fact that the national party idea in Cameroon evolved into its present being through no force or coercion save that dictated by our painful experience of the pangs and futility of party politics on the European model, in our tribally conscious society.

The advantages of the national party idea soon became apparent to all those who had gone through the earlier multiparty bitter experience.

I) Those seeking elective office either won or lost without the painful cost, bitterness and discord to the community that had been our earlier experience. Candidates either won or lost without ruining themselves financially as hitherto. Campaigns for the party list turned out to be rallies of joyful Cameroonians who listened to speeches all directed at the unity of the nation rather than of the bitter polemics of the earlier days.

II) The elected members worked as a team in the National Assembly concentrating on the common objective of development of the Fatherland, rather than in the spirit of "Government" and "Opposition."

III) The President and Government now stood in the centre of the nation unfettered by any partisan consideration in the choice of his Ministers and Cabinet members, and in the distribution of the national cake.

IV) Political victimisation of adversaries, as known in the multiparty days, especially in former West Cameroon, became a forgotten evil of the past.

Decisions in the various national caucuses and assemblies were now through general acclaim and consensus, purely in the interest of the nation and the common good, rather than through the vote by the majority party right or wrong as happened in the days before.

Cameroon's Ever Unfolding Political Scene

CNF – KUNC – CPDM (1949-1985)

By the ebbing days of 1949 while Dr. E.M.L. Endeley and I were pairing as President and General Secretary respectively of the CDC Workers Union with headquarters at Buea, we launched the Cameroon National Federation (CNF) with our office at Kumba under a Permanent Undersecretary, Mr. Z.N. Efamba. Here also Dr. Endeley was President and I sat at the desk of Secretary General.

CNF membership was restricted to existing tribal, clan and trade union organisations in then British Cameroons. These were the members: Bakweri Improvement Union, CDC Workers Union, Bafaw Improvement Union, Balong Improvement Union, Balue Improvement Union, Bakundu Improvement Union, Mbonge Improvement Union, Ekombe Improvement Union, Bangwa Improvement Union, Balondo Improvement Union, Ngolo-Batanga Improvement Union, All Bakossi Improvement Union, Ejagham Improvement Union, Bamenda Improvement Association. We ran the CNF more or less as a political party with the spirit of consensus binding the unions together.

The CNF however was short-lived due to disagreement between its leadership at the Kake Conference of 1951 leading to my resignation from the organisation. As most of the unions followed me into my protest, we launched a new political group, the Kamerun United National Congress (KUNC). We invited the venerable Mr. R.J.K. Dibonge, a retired Douala-born British colonial civil servant, as leader, with me as Secretary General. We encouraged the strong French Cameroon Welfare Union into the KUNC bringing in a new dimension of politics unknown in the territory before. The hitherto passive role played by French Cameroonians in the territory's political affairs gave way to a new surge of participation. Until then, they had been treated as aliens not even enjoying basic franchise. The KUNC promised to set many of these things right breaking down the barriers that divided Cameroonians, advocating for greater interaction between Cameroonians on both sides of the frontier and looking forward to unification. At its inaugural conference in Kumba in 1951, a number of observer delegates from French Cameroon attended, prominent amongst them being Mr. Rueben Urn Nyobe who personally lodged with me and Abel Kingue, all of the UPC.

The United Nations visiting mission in 1951 was received by the

KUNC on such a scale that we totally stole the show from the older CNF. At this stage a certain political event swept through Nigeria that did not spare the territory which rudely interrupted the surging aspirations of the KUNC. The British Government announced introduction of the proposals of the new Macpherson Constitution to replace the Richards Constitution which had been undergoing revision since 1948. Elections to the three Regional Houses of Assembly at Enugu, Ibadan and Kaduna and to the House of Representatives in Lagos, were announced for December 1951. This suddenly turned the steps of politically conscious Cameroonians towards the elections that produced our first thirteen Cameroon members to the Eastern House of Assembly at Enugu. The flow of events dictated by the arrival of the Macpherson Constitution, is fully narrated elsewhere in this record up to the outbreak of the Eastern Crisis in January 1953 and the declaration of "Benevolent Neutrality," by Dr. Endeley, in April of the same year.

It is here that my KUNC leader, Mr. Dibonge sprang me the surprise of the year by hastily announcing his support for Dr. Endeley's policy and handing the KUNC (minus the U) to Dr. Endeley making it KNC. If any issue more than others reduced my faith in men and in the cause of unification which had brought Mr. Dibonge and me into the same bandwagon, it is this u-turn on me and the loss of my KUNC overnight in 1953.

Did anyone clearly know who was the true president of the KNC, Dr. Endeley or Mr. Dibonge? Dr. Endeley again scored this round over me as I returned from Lagos in April 1953 to find my one time KUNC leader hand in glove with him. Little had I known how difficult it was for me as a young four to nine underdog in the Cameroons split to keep the loyalty of Mr. Dibonge in my fight against a Federal Minister backed by a Governor General. However after seven years, by 1960, the force of circumstances and events propelled the KNC (of Dr. Endeley) and the KPP (of Mr. Mbile) into a new fraternity and cause in the formation of the CPNC.

As recorded elsewhere in the story the Cameroon Peoples National Convention (CPNC) was later caught in the whirlpool of change to find itself in arms even with its former adversaries (KNDP, CUC) into CNU in 1966 and CPDM in 1985. So, through the ever unfolding political nature of the Cameroonian in often preferring fusion rather than confusion we all came together again under the banner of the

CPDM. That is until a new storm of change arrived in 1991.

Faith with the Spirit of Our Ancestral Past

I wonder how many of us have ever asked how our forbears took decisions in the governing circles of their time before the western method of Government was thrust upon our traditional system. It is a fact that either in the republican south where the governing body was the council of elders, or in the north where the ruling despot sat in his court or council of advisers, there must have occurred occasions when decisions were taken by the authorities on matters of state; where there were sometimes more than a single opinion or where there were actual differences of opinion. Was there any such thing as “voting,” in the taking of the decisions in such situation? If for instance the council of elders of the village or clan government was deciding to launch an attack against an enemy village or clan, and the members of the council were called to approve the going to war, and there happened to be some difference of opinion, was there any “voting” amongst the members to see how many were in favour?

No, there was never “voting”. The matter was discussed on its merits and agreement was by consensus, rather than by “voting.” As a matter of fact, it is said that even one member, who felt strongly one way, could influence the consensus even though the majority had felt differently at the onset. When the majority felt strongly different, they tried all they could by persuasion to sell their view to the dissenting side, and if it was adamant, the meeting could even rise, so that the dissenting member could be persuaded to agree. The meeting always strove to obtain total agreement by consensus rather than by “voting” out the minority opinion. Against this traditional practice of our fathers, sprang the present ingredient in the principle of the CNU now CPDM, rather like our fathers did. Affairs were discussed purely on their merits with no one or group constituting a permanent “opposition” to the “Government” but the opinions of debaters flowing only as dictated by the demands of truth and common interest. No one stood to gain from the fall of the Government in which all shared. The spirit of agreement by consensus under the CNU now CPDM kept faith with that of our fathers of old.

Any wonder that in many of our traditional dialects we had no name for “majority” “minority” or “opposition.”

More than three decades ago, the dawn of Cameroon Independence spread its radiant light of freedom across the land. Millions of Cameroonians witnessed the historic event of which their ancestors and their forebears hardly dreamt could one day be a legitimate aspiration of the black man. Some of those who lived to see that day that had for centuries eluded their fathers only dimly grasped the full significance of the event. As a matter of fact, for an indefinite period of time countless Cameroonians may only grope about, as to the real meaning of this heritage we have won. As coming events continue to daily unfold, there is even the danger that the real germ of independence may be lost or confused, and the once colonial burden which independence claims to have put down, may only have shifted to the other shoulder. This is why, those of us in the first generation to whom fate had assigned the duty of receiving this peoples priceless heritage of freedom, have a sacred task in our hands. In the discharge of that duty, we may either successfully fulfil the dreams and aspirations of our countrymen, living and unborn, or we may dash them to the ground.

It is against the preceding background that the story of Cameroon political history will be incomplete without a chapter on the Unfinished Task before us. Here, I shall endeavour to point out some of the aspects of that unfinished task, without attempting to arrogate to myself the powers of either the oracle or even the claim to exhaust the list. The opinions are mine, and if I may borrow a line from Mr. P.M. Kale of blessed memory in his 'Political and Economic History of the Cameroons' "all the errors are mine." The basis of my claim and assertions however need to be stated.

As one of the original thirteen, as an active participant in the political goings on in British Cameroons since 1949, I am sure no fair mind can grudge me the right to be heard and be placed on record. In Africa generally, and Cameroon in particular, such a humble effort in spelling out part of our unfinished task, ought to find some purpose and some use, to our silent millions:

Our National Parliament

In a democracy such as Cameroon now claims to be, there is no overstating the importance of parliament. Parliament should not only be the seat of our law making exercise, it should be the centre of our democracy in practice. Parliament should provide the loftiest forum in a country where the people watch their representatives speak for them, and where they can observe Government and Parliament working together on the problems of the nation. The voices of members of Parliament ought to be daily heard loud and clear, in the performance of their duty as their people's spokesmen. Where the voices of members are hardly heard, such a situation cannot be consistent with the requirements of democracy, and such members can hardly justify their seats and their pay, in a young vigorous nation as Cameroon. Should the Committee system reduce the working of parliament to mere whispering than speaking, with the result that even though members may be doing their best, there exists little opportunity for their constituents to know if their representatives are active or are mere bench warmers? The working of democracy must be both seen and heard.

On another score, no one can dispute the fact that in the working of a democratic parliament, the trend ought to be to broaden representation to such an extent that while we must exercise financial prudence, we ought to aim at corresponding our parliamentary spread and representation with our Cameroon Government policy of carrying administration nearer the people. Wider representation may cost more, but this is the price a democracy must be ready to pay for good government, and the satisfaction of the people in their enjoyment of true representative Government.

The God of Dossiers and Late Pay

Within the administrative and governmental system in Cameroon there exist two gods whose demands transcend even the yoke of our former colonial masters. The agony of three decades and more, under the oppressive heel of these insatiable gods should be enough for us to ask ourselves why these strange demons continue to enslave the average Cameroonian especially those publicly employed. Men and

women have travelled for thousands of miles, school teachers have abandoned their pupils for months, while public servants have deserted their posts for countless periods, all to satisfy the demands of a god of dossiers that we have enthroned to sit as our oppressor. The two gods, especially the god of dossiers appear particularly heartless, because no matter how one tries, there is always one document lacking or incorrect. Then after struggling and travelling for months to fill the incorrect or lacking one, the unfortunate worshipper arrives one day to find the whole file missing, and so he is sent back to begin the whole exercise all over again.

As for the god of No Pay, he is as unhelpful as his elder brother, the god of dossiers. Can anyone imagine a more unreasonable god than this one who after posting a school leaver to some outlandish place on duty, abandons him or her there to live on air? So, this beginner starts off by borrowing for as long as months, before he receives his pay packet, and often only part. Not even the arrival of the computer has been able to satisfy this god of late payment, and until the Ministry of Finance can remove this heartless god from our midst, we must continue to count this as one of our nation's unfinished tasks. We have said nothing of the long journeys the victim makes to plead for his legitimate retirement benefits, as if the long trips and wait demanded by the earlier two gods had not been enough punishment. Can it be said that we have done all we can and have exhausted all effort to eliminate these oppressive gods from our midst?

The Question of Priorities

Amongst the unfinished tasks of the Cameroon nation must be numbered the vexing question of deciding on the order of priorities in our virtually endless list of pressing needs. This is because there is such a long list of our needs as a young developing country that we have to be most responsible and calculating in the application of our meagre and limited resources. To both our leadership and Cameroonians as a whole, therefore, this is one of the most delicate and binding duties in the performance of which we owe a sacred trust. With our eyes open, we must choose our priorities in such a way as not to put the cart before the horse, or place petty, private or sentimental interests before those of the nation as a whole. The sacredness of our duty is the more so, as we choose for the silent millions often wallowing in the grip of

ignorance of their true interests and welfare. It is like choosing for the blind, speaking for the deaf, helpless through their incapacity. Those saddled with the mantle to choose therefore, bear the utmost responsibility.

Since independence, Cameroon at one time enjoyed a buoyant if not a booming economy, our present crisis notwithstanding. While we have not yet joined OPEC, we have been listed amongst the oil-producing countries. Against this background, it does seem to me that a reason or any stress for our backwardness and underdevelopment appears more from our incapacity at a proper order of priorities in our development effort, than on any question of genuine poverty.

For instance, what satisfactory explanation can anyone give for the strange order of priorities in this country, in spending enormous amounts of our limited development resources in investing a disproportionate amount on roads in certain privileged areas, whereas large parts of the rural sector in the country lie totally shut in without a single kilometre of even a seasonal road? Can anyone in Cameroon claim ignorance of the fact that head loading, clearly out of date in the 20th century, is still the only available means of transportation of goods and produce in many parts of our rural heartland, whilst millions are being spent on sky scraper offices with lifts and toilets hardly working? Yet, only a fraction of what is spent on these prestige projects could have transformed the fate of thousands of our rural citizenry from languishing in their present poverty and misery, often in the midst of agricultural plenty. The cost of five kilometres of a prestige road can disenclave an entire shut-in tribe.

This is more than three decades after independence. I do not need to list other examples that portray an alarming failure in the proper placing of our order of priorities in our development process. Surely, our financial experts and advisers in this field owe us some explanation.

Do we have to be experts to know that in the task of development of a young country like Cameroon, there are certain basic projects upon which its general and specific development hinge? Education, infrastructure, health, surely ought to enjoy a higher priority than the narrower target of prestige projects. A more deliberate attempt to spread development projects to all the nation's corners can hardly be over emphasised. Above all, it should lie amongst our highest priorities that all Cameroonians must be made to belong effectively to the

mainstream of the nation's progress and development by being physically linked through effective communication and administration to the centres of Government and economy. It is hardly defensible that thirty eight years after independence there should still be Cameroonians whose only means of bringing out the results of their agricultural effort is by the medieval transport system of head loading. Millions in our rural areas shall never enjoy pipe-borne water and/or electricity in their lifetime. Even if we need not despair and blame our lot in being amongst the underdeveloped nations of the world, with a strikingly low percent of our population living above subsistence level, we shall have little excuse for not prudently spreading our god-given resources to cover the broad needs of our people, in a proper order of priorities.

In concluding this chapter on our Unfinished Task, I can only repeat my position as pointed out earlier. I am no oracle, but a simple Cameroonian whose views are freely commended to my fellow countrymen for what they are worth. Surely in only some four decades of independence it would be too utopian of a state if all our problems were solved. Yet, we all have the duty to make it clear to ourselves and to our fellow countrymen both high and low, that we shall gravely err if we ever thought our society was yet perfect, and even the more so, if we said nothing about our failings and our unfinished task. In this attempt, I wish to state in all humility that I am far from exhausting the list of what I regard as our unfinished task. Let the good Lord give us wisdom and will to tackle and overcome even part of that which I have endeavoured to list above.

Non-Cameroonians as well as Cameroonians must often be baffled at the Cameroonian spirit of contradictory tendencies, accommodation and compromise, discord and diversity, bitterness and rancour and yet understanding and humanity, all bundled together.

Indeed, few would have believed that in less than two months from our bitter plebiscite days, Southern Cameroonians across the parties would be seen drinking and laughing together cracking jokes like “when will your ship be ready to ferry our 98.000 men to Nigeria”? Indeed who would have believed that only eight weeks after the plebiscite, one would see the picture of Mbile holding an umbrella over the head of Foncha lecturing in the rain at the Buea market.

This is exactly what happened after a joint meeting of the KNDP and CPNC on our return from the UNO, New York, in 1961. Together, we were addressing the population and learning to accommodate unification. At the Fouban Conference we sweated together for days, trying to salvage what we could of our Anglophone values in the impending setup.

During a visit to Buea soon after the plebiscite, President Ahidjo sprang all a huge surprise by inviting the leaders of the “defeated” CPNC to the Schloss⁷ to assure us that despite the views we had held, he harboured no bitterness against us and that in the task of nation building which lay ahead, all Cameroonians would be welcome. Such was magnanimity in victory. Indeed, a catalogue of certain

In January 1953 during the “Eastern crisis” in the House of Assembly at Enugu, the thirteen Cameroonian members earned the title of the “Cameroon Bloc” owing to their solid stand by the NCNC in the midst of numerous carpet crossings on the Assembly floor. Only weeks later, in Lagos, they split into two camps when the controversial policy of “Benevolent Neutrality” was pronounced by Dr. Endeley.

The KNC and KPP were formed out of the KUNC and later the KNC split into part: KNDP and part to its original self. In 1958,

⁷ Schloss: from German to mean the Prime Minister’s residence in Buea. It was the residence of the German Governors of Kamerun when Buea was capital.

pressed to the wall, the KNC formed an alliance with the KPP, but at the 1959 elections, the allies unable to field joint candidates in the constituencies especially in Victoria East and Mamfe East, lost power to the KNDP by a close 14:12 in the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly. Expulsions from the KNDP in the sixties led to the formation of the CUC. Meanwhile the KNC and KPP seeing the folly of discord in their 1958 alliance, forged the CPNC perhaps belatedly in June 1960.

Then came the unprecedented carpet crossing from the CPNC to the KNDP following the elections to the House of Assembly in 1961, until it became painfully clear that Southern Cameroonians were either not ripe to operate the multiparty system, or that their politicians and leaders had not the will and courage to endure the cold benches of an opposition, till their turn come round to win power. Hence the rush to the shielding recourse of a national party under the CNU. The protection which Foncha was incapable of offering the opposition by his repressive regime seemed better assured under the umbrella of the CNU, within a partnership in which Foncha himself dwindled to only a “petit frère”⁸ to the “grand camarade”⁹.

This catalogue leaves even the ablest student of human nature in the air, hardly able to lay his mind firmly on what constitutes the real character of the Cameroonian in politics. As subsequent events were to show, even the seeming patriotic character displayed in the post-plebiscite truce hardly stood the test of time and was soon trampled under foot by the ever warring and ever fragmenting Southern Cameroonian politicians. So, this final act only served to confound the more, students in search of the core of the Cameroonian character.

To have embraced so challenging a cause as unification in bitter discord has never done credit to the Southern Cameroonian sense of vision. Indeed, in their endless splits and feuds, even the idea of unification has, to men like Mr. Ndeh Ntumazah, continued only as a dream. From the UPC, Ntumazah had formed the One Kamerun (OK). Ideas do not implement themselves; men implement ideas.

Mr. Ntumazah still owes the Cameroon nation an explanation why in twenty years he had not come home to see his dream of “unification

⁸ “petit frère” in French, meaning a junior friend

⁹ “grand camarade” was nickname for Amadou Ahidjo

immediate” at work. In the final analysis, what should constitute the Cameroonian character cannot be isolated from what the Cameroon people have manifested over the years, as their nature. Does it not indeed strike one that fanatic architects of this idea finally failed to show up while those who had counselled caution and entertained fears have ended up amongst its most ardent props?

Paradoxically, it must go on record that unification, dreaded though it was, turned out to be the most effective force that served to neutralise and effectively disintegrate the highly tribalistic and repressive KNDP regime at Buea in the years 1959-1965 and ensure confidence and faith from West Cameroon minorities, in the United Republic. Our unhappy experience as opposition to the KNDP in its days at Buea was such that whatever our earlier fears and doubts, we, ethnic minorities, found unification in the end, the saving grace. It is thus the absolute truth to say that the opposition at Buea was literally salvaged from extinction by the arrival of the CNU.

Yet, everything put together there must be something wise and noble in this hydra-headed character of the Cameroonian. For while he could be intense and bitter as in the KNC/KPP days or during the KNDP/CPNC conflict, the Cameroonian can be humane and feeling as during the Nigeria/Biafra war when a surprisingly high percentage of Cameroonians sympathised with the plight of the Ibos, who were underdogs in the conflict. This, in harsh contradiction to the fact that the Ibos had been their target of hostility in the plebiscite days.

Surely there can be no better time to judge a noble spirit than in the hour of distress. The Southern Cameroonian is truly noble, if philosophic in his spirit of tolerance even in extreme suffering, his indifference when others would explode, his fear of the extreme. It is to our credit that even in the years of bitter politics, there was not a single case of extreme action like murder, violent assault or people “jumping into the bush.”

Those who do not see virtue in this but would perhaps have wished to see the Molongo, the Mokanya or the Nwane-Ngoh explode into violence in order to carry out political threats may have been disappointed. We have no apologies to offer to such prophets of doom, or sensation mongers looking for material for their records. We fought the plebiscite and we bowed to the will of the majority of our people wrong or right. This goes to the eternal credit of both leaders as well as followers on both sides of the battle lines, that we did not carry

our political threats to the absurdity of the extreme “in accepting the UNO verdict and counsel.” For men handling the fate of others have no right to proceed head long into executing threats without counting the cost to their often-silent followers. After all, in the heat of the moment when a leader’s passion rises and he issues a threat, his followers may be miles away. Is it not nobler that in the quiet day of sober reflection, the leader counts the cost of proceeding with his threat and lets wiser counsel prevail? Yet, to out-law threats for fear of their possible non-fulfilment is to admit ignorance of human nature.

Have we not seen examples in human history when the folly of dying rather than living by a threat did not win applause? Let us take the tragic example in Guyana in November 1978, when a misguided religious fanatic issued a threat “We must die with dignity” and to carry it out, 900 innocent followers of his sect including Jim Jones himself lay dead? Most of the victims were black Americans from the ghettos of the United States. Jim Jones, a white, did not drink the cyanide that killed his followers, but blew off his own brains when he found out that his 900 followers lay dead in order to carry out his threat.

Now, returning to the Cameroonian character, what has held the Cameroon nation together more than anything else is not the grand constitution we wrote, not the angels of civil servants and politicians who run our affairs, but the spirit of tolerance in the character of the Cameroonian. Judging by the eruptions around us in Nigeria, Zaire, Chad, C.A.R., Equatorial Guinea, Uganda and Angola to name only these, we should be grateful to be what we are. Are we not unique indeed in the way we have wrestled with all the problems of our state in the first thirty years of independence? Surely, we have had our moments of trial and strain, but the chain has held. Above all, we must never forget the element of luck that clearly was on our side, this quarter century. We should call it God.

When all is said and done perhaps we may say that the Cameroonian, due to his character, his often choice of fragmentation to escape confrontation, his capacity to bear patiently the burden of his mistakes, this specimen of the human specie has in a region of turbulence been able to survive intact to lay the firm foundation of a nation for himself and his posterity.

Ahidjo’s Cabinet of 1975



Front row (L to R): Ayissi Mvodo, Sadou Daoudou, Paul Biya, Ahmadou Abidjo, Samuel Eboa, Enoch Kwayeb, E.T. Egbe. Back row (L to R): 1. Andzè Tsoungui, 2. Delphine Tsanga, 3. Paul Fokam-Kamga, 4. Philemon Yang, S. Yousonfa Daouda, 6. John Kengong Monie, 7. Naah Robert, 8. Beb a Don, 9. Christian Bongwa, 10. Ndam Njoya, 11. Sengat Kuo, 12. Henry Namata Elangwe, 13. Paul Dontsop, 14. 15. Charles Doumba, 16. Felix Tonye Mbok, 17. Yadji Abdoulaye, 18. Vroumsia Tchinye, 19. Hamadou Moustapha, 20. Bidias a Ngon, 21. Rene Ze Nguete, 22. Bello Bouba Maigari, 23. Dr. Maikano Abdoulaye, 24. Joseph Awunti, 25. Dr. Dorothy Njeuma, 26. Marcel Yondo

Exit Ahidjo, Enter Biya

Even to those now accustomed to the fast changing scene in independent Africa, the news was electric, the move dramatic, and there could hardly be a better example of a political bolt from the blue. President Amadou Ahidjo of Cameroon shook the world with the announcement of his departure from the office he had held for over twenty years, a near quarter century. In one of the shortest speeches in his entire public life, Ahidjo renowned for his lengthy speeches, some spanning a full five hours, shocked the listening world with the news that he was renouncing his office as President of the United Republic of Cameroon, and handing over to the Prime Minister, Paul Biya. The speech itself delivered in Yaounde on Thursday 4th November, 1982, lasted approximately six minutes, left little for argument, and threw his Cameroon people and the world at large wondering at what could have so pressured this astute politician into dropping the revered office of President of the United Republic of Cameroon.

So, on Saturday, 6th November 1982, Paul Biya 49, a charming reserved public servant who had risen from the civil service to Prime Minister of the Republic of Cameroon was sworn in as President of the United Republic of Cameroon, by Assembly President Hon. S.T. Muna, in the hall of the Cameroon National Assembly.

In the act of handing over, Ahidjo was assisted by the Cameroon constitution which provided that the Prime Minister takes over from where an incumbent President leaves an unfinished term of office. The argument therefore runs strong in support of the view that had Ahidjo acted otherwise than to hand over to Paul Biya in obedience to the constitution, he, Ahidjo, would have stood little chance to justify his action before contemporary opinion, as well as escape condemnation by posterity. One mystery, one unanswered question remains; why did Ahidjo hand over in such haste; so unceremoniously? Was anything pressuring him?

On the positive side, analysts gave marks for the handing over; for not sitting tight, no matter the timing, and full marks for not handing

over on parochial basis as some may have wished. By this, he ensured Cameroon continued respect for the equality of all sons and daughters of the Fatherland, and a blow against any talk of distinction based on tribe, language or religion in the sharing of high office in the Republic.

Howbeit, the drama of Ahidjo's unceremonious exit, and Biya's graceful, peaceful take over, were not without some harsh rumblings in their aftermath. For soon after, Moussa Yaya and his gang of four fell from grace and were expelled from the CPDM party losing their seats in the National Assembly, as well as all other official positions they held. Moussa Yaya, a towering political figure in the Ahidjo era, greatly resembling the late Tafawa Balewa of Nigeria both in bearing and influence, was reported to have held as many as ten official appointments, and the report in the Government-owned "Tribune" gave him as being worth more than 4 billion francs CFA at the time of his fall. As for the reason behind the fall of Moussa Yaya and his gang, most of those outside the party and government inner circle could only speculate. At least up to the time of writing this, I personally could say no more on this point.

So, President Paul Biya took command and set to work in earnest, commencing on an early meet-the-people tour from Anglophone Bamenda February 9th and 10th 1983, visiting all the seven capitals, and ending with Yaounde in the Central South Province. Addressing the enormous crowd that jammed the Bamenda sport stadium, in good English, the President met the hearts of his hearers in a fashion never known before. There was no need for cumbersome translation. He later on the tour, addressed the people of the South West Province in similar style on 15th and 16th April, 1983, earning an affectionate ovation from the cross section of the people of the Province who had poured into Buea in their thousands to greet the new leader. Indeed, a new President in the person of Paul Biya had truly arrived and his name catching their wildest imagination was now indelibly engraved in the scroll of history as the second President of the United Republic of Cameroon.

Biya Asserts His Time

It was less than a year since Ahmadou Ahidjo had stunned the world by dropping the Presidential crown of the United Republic of Cameroon, and despite entreaties from his then worshippers, some in tears, he had stuck to his resolve to go.

The reasons for the sudden resignation were shrouded in mystery, and the Cameroon population and the world at large fell into mere speculation as to the exact issues that prompted this hasty departure. Public speculation ranged widely from failing health, to threats from sources that remained secret and clandestine. This was because Ahidjo gave no categorical reason himself for quitting.

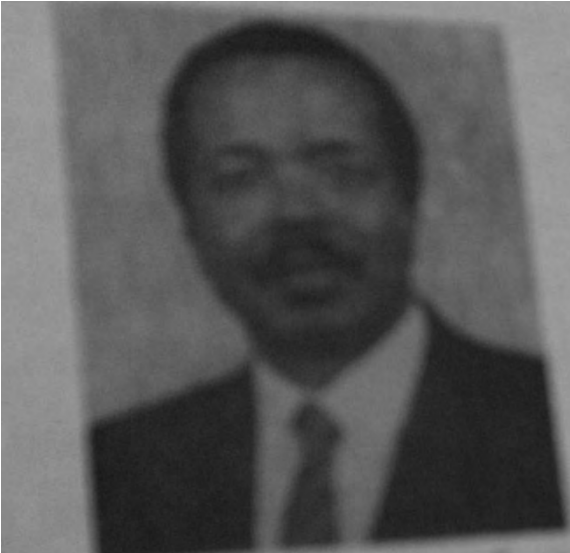
Paul Biya, to whom he had handed over, by virtue of his constitutional position, soon found as rumours had it, that his one time mentor still angled for power, to the extent that he (Ahidjo) expected the President to consult him on matters that lay within the President's exclusive prerogatives.

As the rumours grew stronger, a reporter of the government owned *Cameroon Tribune* interviewed Ahmadou Ahidjo in Yaounde early in 1983, to secure the former President's view on the rumours. Ahidjo maintained that he was not at all interfering in the duties of the President; that he truly and willingly had handed over to Biya and that if he had not wanted Biya to be President, he would have replaced him as Prime Minister with some one else who could have become the President instead.

Many analysts read Ahidjo's answers with surprise and dismay. Was Ahidjo really telling the world that he could have manipulated Cameroonians and the Cameroon constitution to his whims and caprices? Why was Ahidjo still holding on to the Presidency of the CNU party, thus creating the erroneous impression of two Presidents. Then as if this was not enough, he still flew about with the Presidential jet, and when he visited Abuja to meet President Shagari of Nigeria, the new Prime Minister Bouba Bello Maigari was a member of his entourage. Was Ahidjo still posing as Head of State? So the situation continued pretty confused as to who was really in power, Biya or Ahidjo. Tongues started wagging, and many began wondering if history was going to witness a black "Mao Tse Tung" in Cameroon. The fears were reinforced in the allocation, as rumours had it, of the former Prime Minister's premises by the Yaounde artificial lake, to Ahidjo as his Yaounde official residence and the reports further circulated that two billion francs had been earmarked for its further decoration. Soon

the stories grew stronger than rumours as bulldozers were seen at work in the precincts of the palm fringed location, opening up new roads and excavations at the residence.

So, when President Biya began to assert his authority through a number of cabinet reshuffles, eyes opened wider and Cameroon tongues wagged louder. Indeed, when some of Ahidjo's well known barons began to topple down from their heights, the secret could hardly be kept any longer that the new President was out on his own trail. On the eve of the French President, Francois Mitterrand's visit to Cameroon in April 1983, there took place the heaviest cabinet reshuffle in the fall of heavies like Ayisi Mvodo, Samuel Eboa and Saoudou Daoudou. Few now had any more doubts that President Paul Biya was wielding power under no more instruction from Ahidjo.



President Paul Biya: Second President of the Republic of Cameroon. Assumed office 4th November, 1982. Author of the "New Deal" and exponent of Communal Liberalism He re-introduced multipartism and democracy in Cameroon in 1990.

Rumours say a virtual crisis was on with men like Hon. S.T. Muna and E.T. Egbe shuttling several times between the towns of Yaounde and Garoua to carry the terms of the shuttle debate that was on in the power match between Biya and Ahidjo. It seemed apparent that Paul Biya had decided either to hold his ground as President of the United

Republic of Cameroon, or be condemned by history as the man who preferred to play the puppet with power in his hands. If there was anything that gave President Biya resolve, it was the loud signal from the Cameroon people including the armed forces, that he was the man they all wanted on the reins.

The Cameroon population made little secret of the fact that they were solidly behind the man to whom Ahidjo himself had openly handed over power. No doubt encouraged by this, and also by that of his own courage, Biya clearly asserted his authority as the President of the Republic. In the shuttle debate between Yaounde and Garoua, Biya is reported to have held every inch of his ground and left the other side in no doubt that he was not ready to play the second fiddle. In this, Cameroon posterity owes Biya eternal credit for not giving way. One brave man saved his country from the clutches of a system that would have steeped Cameroon for an unknown period into a terrible precedent, where without any change in the country's constitution, the President of the Republic could have become a puppet under a super President. No doubt realising he had lost this round, Ahidjo left Cameroon for France in the European summer of 1983, and observers found him travelling with an unusually large number of luggage. It is said that as the cost of a charter plane was considered too much for the economy of Cameroon Airlines, the former President travelled by the normal passenger flight to France. At Douala airport, CNU party officials saw him off since he was still President of the Cameroon National Union, The old grand guards of honour had gone.

Back home in Cameroon, a new pressure began mounting in the public mind for matters to be clearly sorted out. The anomaly of two presidents was still there, creating difficulty for Paul Biya. How could he serve with full powers as President without enjoying the total loyalty of all Cameroonians to him, since he was still only a Vice President of the CNU? With Ahidjo now globe trotting, could the President of the Republic exercise unfettered power if he did not control the highest organ of the CNU?

Then, while these questions sought answers, something dramatic happened. On 22/8/83, President Paul Biya came on the air and in a short speech to the Cameroon Nation announced that evidence had surfaced against a number of Cameroonians in their plan to attack the security of the Cameroon Republic. To counter the subversive elements President Biya took a number of swift measures, political,

administrative and military. In a government reshuffle, Prime Minister Bouba Bello Maigari, and Dr. Maikano Abdoulaye lost their posts. Northern Cameroon was split into three provinces and Central South into two, all making ten provinces in the Republic. In the military, a High Command was set up under General Semengue as Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, and Mr. Luc Ayang was appointed acting Prime Minister.

Then, like a thunderstorm, the whole nation rose in the most massive support for President Biya. Messages of solidarity poured from all the comers of the nation to the President, pledging him unflinching support. Individuals, organisations, CPDM sections all spoke out in unbroken unison of support for President Biya. He was urged to convene an Extraordinary Congress of the CPDM to enable the party take a stand on the issue of the President of the CPDM. The Cameroon National Assembly sat in emergency session to affirm their support for President Biya.

From far away France came the voice of Ahmadou Ahidjo through Radio France International. He was reported to have spoken out uncomplimentarily of the goings on back home in Cameroon. He later, still in France, resigned as President of the Cameroon National Union on 27/8/83 opening the way for the people and militants of the CND to fill the post with the man who now enjoyed their universal confidence. So, on Wednesday 14th September 1983 President Paul Biya was elected National President of the CPDM party in the Yaounde Congress Hall by the Extraordinary CPDM congressionists who had massed there from all sections of the Republic.

With the election of Paul Biya as National President of the CNU, he now combined this with his office as President of the United Republic of Cameroon, and things now were as they should be. The era of Ahmadou Ahidjo had finally come to a full close ushering in the new era of Paul Biya, which the Cameroon people soon gave the name of-era of the New Deal.

Biya Surmounts A Mighty Coup.

One Friday morning, 6th April 1984, at Kumba where I dwell I was working in my cocoa nursery, still in my morning loincloth when a friend drove in. He appeared excited as he proceeded to speak and I could discern that he had a message of the utmost importance. Soon,

he came out with the news.

“Man, it has happened at last.”

“What?” I shot in.

“Well, it is all over the market place as I drove past, a coup in Yaounde” I was down for a virtual count.

“My God,” I thundered, “so at last this dreaded thing comes to Cameroon! Any details?”

“None yet, but it must be the northerners.”

We examined the situation critically and decided to await further developments, but I counselled my friend to take a few precautions. “Fill your tank and keep out of careless circulation. Be by your radio and tune BBC and VOA if Yaounde is unhelpful. But keep trying Yaounde; if they are saying nothing then something serious has happened to the Radio station. Which ever way, somebody should soon be talking” Soon, we dispersed, and I quickly took a good bath and put on some sturdy clothes. My radio set was not receiving anything from Yaounde, and BBC and VOA were no better. Then I decided to end this holing in, and drove out in my Land Rover to a point along the Kumba/Limbe road where I had some work going on. This gave me cause to see the place around and watch movements. Who would bother about a mere village, and yet from it there was much I could learn without leaving my work undone.

At the police checkpoint, I saw the boys checking on passengers and moving on the traffic, with no sign of excitement. I was moved on. At the village I had my eye on every movement that could tell a story, but naturally, I was in particular looking out for any military movements.

There was nothing striking, and I soon turned my Land Rover to return to base. This time, I slowed down at the police checkpoint for a chat with one of the officers.

“Officer, any more news from Yaounde?”

“Well, it appears our men are containing things.”

This was the first bit of encouraging news since the morning jolt, and after a few brief exchanges with the policeman, his words and general comportment strongly reassured me as I drove home.

That evening, more news filtered through. Drivers coming in from Douala reported seeing troops from Limbe and Douala apparently

moving towards Yaounde. So clearly, loyal troops were converging on Yaounde and on balance there was still hope that all was not yet lost. Yet Radio Yaounde continued to say nothing and the most disturbing whisper was that no one knew the whereabouts of the President. Surely something was wrong, at least with the radio. If the rebels had won why were they not talking, if our men were in control why were they not saying so. The point was therefore that the struggle was still on as to who really controlled Yaounde, and so Cameroon. These questions and more turned in men's minds until the foreign radios began to talk from about 10 a.m. on Saturday that a coup had taken place in Yaounde, and the whereabouts of President Biya was unclear. A period of anxiety and uncertainty descended on those of us who fully realised the gravity of the situation, and as the fortunes of wars and coups can often hang on a mere thread, no one could be happy with a situation in which the fate of a nation and its people was clearly at stake.

Government through coups cannot appeal to Cameroonians if they appeal to other Africans. Those who have gone through that experience like Togo, Ghana, Nigeria, Chad, to name only these close few, have not brought back a very happy tale. Ghana the one time pride of Africa is now a nation whose nationals are driven around like homeless people. Nigeria the giant and hope of Africa is suffering the agony of perpetual military governments with General after General taking turns as Heads of State, now that Colonels have become Generals¹⁰. Chad is a sad desert land where coups, civil war and military Governments have reduced the place to worse than the French left it. So this was the gloomy picture that threatened to descend on the pleasant green hills, vales and plains of Cameroon? The prayer of all was that the great God should let this threat pass away through the triumph of our loyal troops over the forces of rebellion.

By Saturday morning of April 7th, 1984 the radios of the world, BBC, V.O.A., Radio France International etc were booming the news that the Yaounde coup had failed giving details of the incidents which provincial Cameroonians had not yet known. The rebellion had been staged by the elite Presidential guards, who mounted guard wherever the President went. Conspicuous for their heavy green baggy pants and

¹⁰ Written before Nigeria returned to civilian government

flowing robes with trappings and boots in all the colours of the rainbow, this special set of the Gendarmerie were reportedly treated as the most privileged section of the armed forces with pay and service conditions as lavish as those enjoyed by the French Gendarmerie. Specially selected to ensure the closest security of the President's person, the Presidential Guards in terms of service, pay, protocol, arms etc, were virtually an army itself within the armed forces. It is clear that they appeared responsible and were strictly loyal only to their great mentor.

The story is that the guards were unhappy over the exit of Ahmadou Ahidjo from Unity Palace, and doubtful about their own future, planned the coup to bring back their hero. They appear to have launched the coup ahead of schedule because they had observed Government plans to disperse them. So the coup suffered not only for its immoral motive but from ill-timing. That which the gods want to destroy they first make mad. For what could have been more mad an idea than for anyone to believe that one man shall remain President for ever over Cameroon, or that only one ethnic or cultural group shall enjoy the prerogative of always providing the President of a country.

As the story became clearer, it now showed that the rebels led by Colonel Ibrahim Saleh, Captain Abalele and Colonel Guerendi (still at large, reportedly at Burkina Faso), struck by 3 a.m. on Friday night taking a number of strategic points – Unity Palace, Radio House, Yaounde Airport, the residence of the Minister of Armed Forces and that of General Semengue, as well as the Army Headquarters. They took a number of hostages including Minister Joseph Zambo, Mr. Mbarga Nguele – Delegate General National Security, General Rene Claude Meka – Director of Presidential Security, Colonel Anangah – President Yaounde Military Tribunal. They were later released. Gilbert Tsoungui – Minister of Armed Forces reportedly slipped out of his house and setting up temporary Headquarters somewhere, rallied loyal troops to organise counter attack on the rebels. Secretary of State Amadou Ali, a faithful, in charge of the Gendarmerie, was sadly away on leave.

By Saturday morning of April the the position had greatly altered. Loyal forces from Ebolowa, Douala, Buea and Nkongsamba had joined the loyal army to mount an effective counter attack on the rebels. At 1 p.m. Colonel Titus Ebogo who had been marching from Ebolowa with his 11th infantry battalion recaptured the Yaounde

airport from the rebels in one hour. This enabled airborne loyal troops from Douala and Koutaba to land and reinforce the offensive. The crack paratroopers from Koutaba were particularly effective in recapturing the Presidential Palace with the minimum damage to the 500-billion franc edifice. Loyal troops had clearly inflicted heavy defeat on the rebels who were now fleeing and surrendering in large numbers.

The Cameroon nation and the world at large were greatly relieved by evening of Saturday 7th April 1984 to hear Radio Yaounde play "O Cameroon thou cradle of our fathers" our proud National Anthem, followed immediately by the emotionally charged voice of President Paul Biya. He recounted the sad events that had afflicted the Cameroon nation, and assured all to remain calm as those who had attacked the stability and peace of the state had been soundly routed. He himself was safe and well.

When the story of the April coup of 1984 shall be written, it shall not be complete if we failed to record a small but vital contribution on the loyalists side by the Radio technicians who happened to be on duty at Radio House Yaounde when the rebels struck and captured Radio House. The rebels wanting to tell the world that they had captured power in Yaounde had got one of their leaders Isa Adoum to record a statement for broadcast. The radio boys, using their technical expertise manipulated, so that the rebel broadcast was not heard beyond Yaounde Town, thus reducing to the barest minimum the propaganda effect of their initial success.

This contribution of the radio boys along with the reported assistance from many civilians to track down escaping rebels lends support to the view that war today is not only for the professional soldier nor is it confined to those who may wield the gun and brute force.

All told, can it ever be superfluous to register the greatest credit out of this sad incident, to the Cameroon armed forces who in that crucial hour displayed such loyalty to the cause of the Cameroonian nation, and such exemplary conduct as only the best African soldier of today can manifest towards his country and Fatherland? Indeed the Cameroon armed forces proudly upheld that tradition of the soldier, as defender of the internal and external security of his country and people, and having accomplished this, to gracefully bow out and return with dignity and honour to his barracks. Cameroonians living and unborn shall hold our soldiers in eternal esteem and respect for this

exemplary conduct.

At the head of all the loyalty, courage and valour of the Cameroon soldier as displayed at this historic time, there stands out as the prime defender of the Constitution and people of the Cameroon Fatherland, as the Commander-in Chief of our loyal armed forces, he to whom all credit for our triumph must belong, President of the Cameroon Republic, Paul Biya.

A Tribute to the Heroes of the April Coup of 1984

The following poem was written soon after the triumph of our loyal forces and is particularly dedicated to them and their Commander-in-Chief.

Praise And Honour To the Brave

Ye sons and daughters of the land,
From Shari's banks to Mungo's sand,
Lest pacing time should sour,
The record of our finest hour,
When fate did test our nation's might,
That bloody fateful April night
Praise And Honour To The Brave.

Let's pay due honour to our brave.
In blood this nation's name they saved,
The utmost price they rose to pay,
In all the hazards on their way,
True heroes of the finest core,
They gave their best and even more.
Praise And Honour To The Brave.

Let us start from Semengue,
He kept unyielding to the end
Daring foe and praying friend,
Though outnumbered, though besieged,
Though encircled, though beleaguered,
Played the soldier brave and true
Praise And Honour To The Brave.

General Tataw stood his ground
Brave as lion, fast as hound,
Charging all to face the foe,
Sparing none the warrior's blow.
For in war he was no stranger,
Caring not for risk or danger,
Praise And Honour To The Brave.

Gilbert Tsoungui was a hero,
For he did not as old Nero,
Fiddle, while his nation burned,
But he rallied men to war,
Though untrained in warrior's ways,
Holding out in brave command
Praise And Honour To The Brave.

Colonel Ebogo marched his men,
Caring not for risk or pain,
Swift across the Bulu plain.
A call "to arms" they understand,
Means, risking all for Fatherland,
Our folk, our homes and all our land.
Praise And Honour To The Brave.

Generals Ngansou and Umarou,
Did defend their native land
Though surprised and embarrassed,
By boys and comrades they had nursed,
All stand heroes of the day,
All prepared their lives to lay,
Praise And Honour To The Brave.

There were others firm and true,
Most worthy of the record too,
Captain Ivo cool and brave
Used his calm the boss to save
With his valour and his action
Saved his people and his nation,

Praise And Honour To The Brave.

Then the nation end to end,
Rose, its freedom to defend;
Then the boys from Nkongsamba,
Joined their chums from Douala,
All compatriots far and near,
Darted war wards like a spear
Praise And Honour To The Brave.

Can we ever list the lot,
All who bravely rose and fought,
Even the witty Radio boys,
Swift in mind and strong in voice,
General Asso, Samobo Pierre,
All did save the nation's cause
Praise And Honour To The Brave.

Then came on eve of Saturday,
The anthem of our fatherland,
To clear the air and to restore.
The people's faith as was before
President Biya spoke at last,
Telling all the storm had past.
Praise And Honour To The Brave.

Praise and honour to that name,
Let all the world resound his fame,
In perfect peace he came to power,
As gentle as the morning flower,
Paul Biya never hurt a fly,
Placing faith in God on high.
Praise And Honour To The Brave.

Lest we fail to place on count,
That lone warrior yet unknown,
He who fell that we may live,
That Cameroonians yet unborn,
Coming millions, you and me,

May posses a nation free.
Praise and Honour To The Brave.

Cameroonians now and ever,
Rise to sing and praise our heroes,
They who boldly wrote our name,
On the scroll of human fame,
That our people proud and brave,
Shall not ever be slave,
Praise And Honour To The Brave.

Kumba, 9th October 1985

I wonder how many Cameroonians know who have been our true national heroes, apart from those on whom some local newspapers naively shower (through parochial tribal patriotism) such, often undeserved, honour and title. In my dive into this Cameroon political story, I believe I have found one such hero in the name of Rudolf Douala Manga Bell who was born in Douala in 1872 and died there on 8th August, 1914.

Yes, let us weigh the circumstances surrounding his undeserved death, against the honest testimony of those by his side the day he made peace with his maker. After that, I shall leave it to the honest reader to pass such judgment as he may deem fit, on whether to engrave his name or not in our nation's scroll of fame.

Rudolf of the Royal Bell clan dynasty in Douala was son of Manga Ndoumbe, and grandson of the famous Ndoumbe Lobe. His father, Manga Ndoumbe was educated in Britain as an economist. However, in 1891 despite his father's English training, Rudolf was sent to Germany to study social sciences at Aalen High School (Wurttemberg) and later law, at the University of Bonn. In 1896, Rudolf Manga returned to Douala and joined the colonial administration as a jurist for three years. In December of that year, he married Emma Engome Dayas with whom he had six children. He remained a Christian and monogamous, though a chief, to the end.



King Rudolf Douala Manga Bell (1872 -1914) Executed by the Germans 8th August 1914, Declared National Hero by Cameroon in 1985

In 1897, King Bell Ndoumbe Lobe died and was succeeded by Manga Ndoumbe. Rudolf later left his job in the administration to become a very trusted counsellor and manager of the family estates. This was a period of friction between the colonial administrators and the local population, The height of the differences saw the transfer of the country's headquarters from Douala to Buea in 1902 by Governor Von Puttkamer (in service since 1895).

In July 1902, Rudolf Douala Manga accompanied his father, Manga Ndoumbe, to Germany to protest against the excesses of the local colonial authorities. They were met there in August by King Akwa and his son. The king of Deido, Jim Ekwalla, was also part of the delegation. They returned without any tangible results from Germany, while the authority of Puttkamer was only reinforced. He was recalled in 1906, not for the peoples' accusations against him, but rather as a result of some sordid story concerning passports. Theodore Seitz became Governor.



Adolf Ngosso Din King Rudolf Bell's envoy to Germany in 1914. Was arrested in Berlin and later executed along with his King, 8th August 1914

In 1908, Manga Ndoumbe died and was succeeded by his son, our Rudolf Douala Manga. In a grand ceremony, in Douala, he was installed as the Senior Chief of the Bell clan (a function introduced by the colonial administration).

In 1910, Governor Theodore Seitz decided in favour of a town planning project presented by the Chief of District Douala, Herrmann Rohm. This project involved the expropriation of some of the traditional land of the Douala, to be made a European reservation. The area was to be separated from the indigenous location by a buffer zone of one kilometre. This project which, the Douala contended, contradicted their 1884 treaty with the Germans was rejected by the people. In the controversy that ensued Rudolf Douala Manga stood out a pillar of defence of the people's rights and cause, against the hostile acts of the Germans.

On 30th January 1913, events took a precipitate turn when Douala Manga and the people were served the decree enforcing the expropriation. On the 7th of February, in the name of all the chiefs of Douala, Rudolf Douala Manga sent a protest to the Reichstag (German parliament) followed; on the 20th, by a communication addressed to Governor Theodore Seitz. The expropriation was hotly contested.

Though pressed by Herrmann Rohm, the District Chief of Douala, King Rudolf Douala Manga stood his ground in his continued opposition to the project. On the 4th of August 1913, he was removed from his function as Senior Chief.

In September, the Secretary of State for German colonies visited Douala and confirmed the unpopular expropriation in a public statement. In December, German officials, accompanied by armed police, began destroying houses in the Joss plateau.

In 1914, the matter of the Douala expropriation was raised in the Reichstag and debated. King Rudolf Douala Manga's secretary, Adolf Ngosso Din, had been secretly sent to Germany in December 1913 where the journalist/democrat, Von Helmut Gerlach and Lawyer Dr. Halpette supported and raised the Douala cause amongst the Social Liberals.

In the face of the adverse publicity, in Germany, surrounding the Douala expropriation affair and the bad blood that had obviously developed between King Rudolf Manga and the Kamerun German authorities, the new Governor Ebermayer and Hermann Rohm decided to eliminate Rudolf Douala Manga. On 10th May Rudolf Manga was arrested for treason against the German empire. On 15th May, Ngosso Din was equally arrested in Berlin and repatriated to Douala on the 23rd of May. The captain of the boat "Professor Woermann" which brought Ngosso back to Douala had as his mission to hand him over to the chief of District, Rohm. On the 7th, August 1914, the trial of King Rudolf Manga and Ngosso Din was held. The verdict was death by hanging.

The Execution of Rudolf Douala Manga and Adolf

Ngosso Din - Eye Witness Testimonies:

The execution of Rudolf Douala Manga and Adolf Ngosso Din on the 8th of August, 1914 constitutes one of the darkest acts of the Germans in their thirty-year stay in Kamerun. Had Cameroonians, especially the Douala, been a more vicious race of people, there would have been great rejoicing at their defeat by the English and French in the First World War. This is because the execution of both Rudolf Manga and Adolf Ngosso Din was such an unjust act deserving only such corresponding reaction. Indeed, how else can it be interpreted, when the story is that the Douala people were genuinely objecting to a

project involving expropriating their land, with neither their consent nor compensation. What is worse, it was to create an exclusive European reservation with a buffer zone of one kilometre between them and the Europeans. In effect, this was precisely what had happened in South Africa that resulted in apartheid.

Rudolf Manga had acted most constitutionally by sending his protest to Germany where it was raised as high as in the Reichstag. His secretary Ngosso Din certainly did no wrong as an envoy to convey the people's grievances to the capital of the German empire and raising it properly through a legally recognised German political lobby group. If this is what the Germans interpreted as high treason against the German empire, and for which both the king and emissary were executed, then the standard of German justice, equity and humanity deserves the highest condemnation. The trial was completed in only one day (7th August 1914) making it obvious that only a few hours were spent in hearing evidence and passing judgement. As a matter of fact, this is the type of case that may properly qualify for re-examination and study by the Cameroon Bar Association with a view to seeking redress, despite the lapse of time.

In this regard, it would be revealing to read what testimonies exist from eye-witnesses during the sordid act of the execution of Rudolf Douala Manga and Ngosso Din. At the end, it will surprise no one why Rudolf Manga has qualified to be a "*National Hero*" duly recognized by the state of Cameroon in July 1985.

Testimony by the Missionary Wurthembourgeois Hecklinger, assistant to the president of the Mission of Bali, who assisted Douala Manga right to his last moments, testifies in his journal.

"7th August 1914 ... The trial of Douala Manga and

Ngosso Din for high treason started this afternoon presided over by magistrate Nierdermeier, defended by Dr. Echtheit. The court pronounces a death sentence. At 8:30 p.m., the result of the judgement was communicated to me by the regional administrator. At about 10:00 p.m. I went again to the governor accompanied by the Pallotin Missionary, Martens, to ask for pardon for one of the condemned, Douala Manga. The meeting was held in a solemn atmosphere. The governor examined the file again. We left him at 11:30. I stayed with the condemned, and upon their request, gave them the last oil. I will never forget those nocturnal hours. At 2:00 a.m., I return to the house but no sleep comes to my eyes. All this is very grave and sad at the same time.

8th August, from midday to midday and a half, I was again at the governor's

place for the same reason as last night. A deportation of the senior chief is, because of the present political situation, impossible. At 5:00 p.m. the two will be executed by hanging. God have mercy on their souls. Surely it will be my most terrible day in Kamerun. “

Testimony of Ekambi A Njo who took over the charge of Douala Manga's family when he was arrested.

“At 2:00 a.m. 8th August, without a witness, my king is brought in by a German sub-officer in Kamerun. The exchange between the two men is brief upon his word of honour, Zimmermann accorded two hours to Rudolf to visit, without armed guard, his wife and children. His young 30 year old wife knew nothing about the verdict. The king would not reveal his death sentence to her. He tells her simply that he has come to embrace her and that all will soon be over. But to me, his loyal notable, he confesses the terrible truth and swears me to silence. I suggest to him that Zimmermann certainly wanted to give him a chance to escape and to hide temporally in Nigeria. Then my king stares at me with pity and retorts that he has given his word of honour to the colonel and that he cannot escape leaving Ngosso to die alone; that he has no right to tarnish the name that his ancestors left; that Zimmerman risked dying in his place; without counting all the repercussions that all the people will suffer. I throw myself at his feet crying and it is in this position that he leaves me, going into the night to meet his destiny.”

Testimony of Mme Dagenbach, a Missionary

“After the death of Douala Manga the natives abandoned the town. They visibly had a terrible fear. It was a sad image, especially to the Missionaries. Everywhere the roads were empty, houses empty. On Sunday at most twenty to thirty people were in church.

All of Bell and Akwa are practically empty. On the contrary, intense activities develop in the nights especially in Deido. In the nights secret meetings are held. Spies tell us that in the event of an attack by the English, the Douala are ready to fight against the Germans.

There are practically only fifty natives, mostly of the administration or private companies, to reach New Bell. The others disappear in the neighbouring regions or further into the interior of the country, and this notwithstanding all the controls by patrols on the roads and on the rivers.”

Comments

Can anyone, particularly a Cameroonian, fail to shed a tear at the

hanging of Rudolf Douala Manga and Adolf Ngosso Din (his secretary)? Here was an educated African king whose only charge as far as the record shows, was that he presented to the relevant German authorities, his people's protest and objection to an unpopular town plan resembling South Africa's apartheid. This case amply reveals what may have become a German policy in Kamerun, had destiny not sent Britain and France to replace them from the territory following the First World War. Their seizure of huge chunks of land around Mount Cameroon with neither their owners consent nor any compensation, more than supports this fear.

Their sense of justice, both in Germany and in Kamerun, is difficult to comprehend.

Indeed, the sentiment and political craze that once afflicted Southern Cameroons politicians in their adoption of the German K for the names of their political parties would hardly have enjoyed such popularity if the true German sense of justice and humanity had been known. The ruthless colonial characters of Ebermeyer and Herrmann Rohm were duly repeated by those in Berlin who charged Ngosso Din with high treason against the German empire, and sent him to be hanged in Douala, because he had arrived Berlin, the capital, with a protest for their consideration. And where was King William Kaiser when the father of the boy he was training in Germany, and who was actually a soldier in his army, was being hanged in Douala by Governor Ebermeyer and Chief of District Rohm?

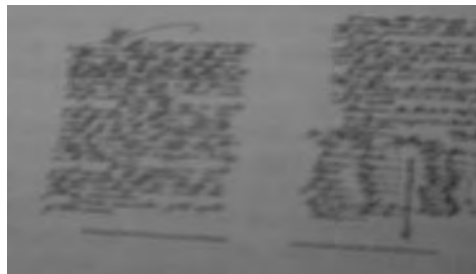
Indeed, from this strange example, it seems as clear as crystal that writing a petition to say "No" to what one disliked would have earned the petitioner the charge of high treason. How many Cameroonians would have faced the gallows if Germany had controlled us beyond their thirty years of stay, is as good your guess as mine. Their reported "twenty four strokes and one for Kaiser" must no longer be cited in humour or joke by the Cameroonian. The whipping of labourers in the plantations for small mistakes like cutting down a young cocoa seedling hidden under grass, was only the warming up period of the repression that was gradually developing from whipping to hanging.

On reflection, it may well be that there is the German side to the Rudolf Manga story. The world should like to hear it, in fairness to their side. This is important if we shall not be left with this sordid picture as the measuring rod of the German government sense and spirit of justice, when they administered Kamerun between 1886 and

1916. It will also be an appropriate gauge with which to weigh the honest validity of the 1884 so called treaty which the Germans appear to have used during their case before the Berlin Conference, as premise for winning the trust from that world body to administer the territory. The point here is that if basically the German sense of justice was what the Manga story reveals, how much reliance can be placed on a treaty concluded between the Germans and a handful of Douala chiefs and notables who claimed to be signing on behalf of what has evolved to the state of Cameroon today.

In order to provide students, researchers, historians, lawyers, etc. the opportunity to examine this document for what it really was worth, I hereunder publish the 1884 Treaty between those who spoke for Germany and the Douala group that claimed to speak for Cameroon. I can hardly wait for the lawyers to say it, that the two parties were so unequal and unmatched in intelligence and responsibility that it fully explains the regard that the 1884 Treaty enjoys. Yet, this must be one of the strongest documents that the Germans used in the 1885 Conference which they had proudly hosted, to gain Kamerun. Note that the Treaty is in English.

The 1884 Treaty



We, the undersigned independent kings and chiefs of the country called Cameroons situated on the Cameroons River, between the River Bimbia on the North Side, the River Qua-Qua on the South Side and up to 4° 10' North latitude have in a meeting held to-day in the German Factory on King Aqua's Beach, voluntarily concluded as follows:

We give this day our rights of sovereignty the legislation and management of this our country entirely up to Mr. Eduard Schmidt acting for the firm C. Woermann and Mr. Johannes Voss acting for Messrs. Jantzen and Thormahlen, both in Hamburg and for many years trading in this River.

We have conveyed our rights of sovereignty, the legislation and management of this our country to the firms mentioned above under the following reservations:

1) under reservation of the rights of third persons

2) reserving that all friendship and commercial treaties made before with other foreign governments shall have full power

3) that the land cultivated by us now and the places, the towns are built on shall be the property of the present owners and their successors

4) that the Coomie shall be paid annually as it has been paid to the kings and chiefs as before

5) that during the first time of establishing an administration here, our country fashions will be respected Cameroons the twelfth day of July one thousand eight hundred and eighty four.

Signatories

Ed. Woermann

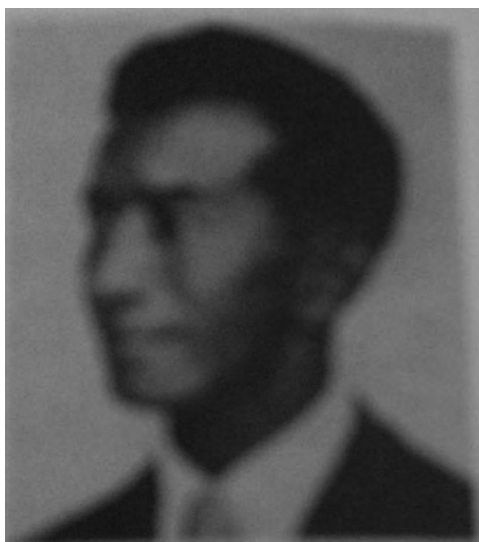
Witnesses

O. Busch EndeneAkwa Ed. Schmidt Coffe Angwa John Angwa MangaAkwa Scott Jost LortenAkwa NedAkwa JaccoEsqre Barrow Peter Lookinglass Bell David Meatom Johaness Voss King Bell Joe Garner Akwa BigJimAkwa Jim Joss Matt Joss David Joss London Bell ElameJoss BlackAkwa

Fate of the Bell Dynasty (Alexander Douala Manga Bell)

Strongly moved by the tragic end – of Rudolf Douala Manga Bell and Adolf Ngosso Din, a dive into the archives of the Bell family reveals more facts and events. They leave several questions unanswered, but above all, leave the German conduct in the entire

story, totally perplexing. Out of the marriage in 1896 of Rudolf Manga and Emma Engome Dayas was born a son, Alexander Ndoumbe Douala Manga Bell, in 1897. Alexander was sent to Germany at the age of four (1901) to be raised in the palace of King Kaiser William II and the king handed the lad to Pastor Scheve, under his supervision, to bring up. It is reported that at the age of fifteen, Alexander returned to the king's palace, joined the army, rose to lieutenant and was in action at the Dardanelle on the German side in World War I. If this is correct, then it means that Alexander was fighting for Germany at the same time that Governor Ebermayer and Hermann Rohm were trying and hanging his father in Douala on 8th August 1914.



Alexander Ndumbe Douala Manga Bell (1897-1966), suffered the strange fate of fighting for the Germans in Europe while they were hanging his father in Douala on 8th August 1914.

In 1919 (after the war) Alexander was repatriated to Cameroon by the French, to whom he had been handed by the defeated Germans. The French however detained his wife and two children. Alexander had married Andrea Minna Berra, of Cuban father, Jose Manuel Berra (pianist) and German mother, Marguerite Sophie Emma nee Filter.

They had two children, a boy, Jose Manga and a girl. These children and their mother remained in France but Jose Manga came to Douala in 1946. Sadly, he was shot by his father when the son, a soldier in the French army, threatened the father, Alexander. It is generally held in Douala that Jose Manga was instigated by the French to kill his father but during the attack, Ndoumbe had killed the son instead. Tragedy appears to have been trailing the Bell house.

In 1946, Alexander Ndoumbe Douala Manga Bell won election to the French National Assembly, capturing the upper Mungo seat, where he was a great favourite amongst the Bamilike who, even more than the Douala, found him an effective advocate against such complaints as “forced labour” and “taxation of women.” Before this time, Alexander was virtually exiled from Douala to the upper Mungo in his family estates where he hunted elephants and sold the ivory.

He clearly was not popular with the French in Douala, possibly due to his German background, even though they had hanged his father. It is also likely that Alexander could not have been at ease with the French in their colonial behaviour. They would not even accord him the chieftaincy stool to which he was heir of the Bell clan. They did not trust him and had instead put up an uncle, Lobe Bell as chief, though in 1950 Alexander regained his throne.

Combining his parliamentary seat in the French National Assembly and Senior Chief of the Bell clan Douala, Alexander steadied himself in the Cameroon political scheme of things in the fifties. Amidst the rumblings stirred up by the younger generation (UPC and others) his royal training in Germany and high politics in France, Alexander was hardly the man for the rough and tumble of Africa’s fledgling politics. However, with Cameroon Independence fast approaching, he clearly found himself slipping between two stools – the National Assembly in Paris and the Territorial Assembly in Yaounde where he had also won a seat. To disengage, in order to prepare himself for the possible candidacy of President of Cameroun, a position he felt eligible for, and since in any case, French Trusteeship was bound to end by 1960, Alexander resigned his seat from the French National Assembly in 1958. He appears to have also resigned his seat in the Territorial Assembly in Yaounde, which he is reported not to have ever occupied.

Overwhelmed by waves of events in a life battered by forces too much for a single man, Alexander is reported to have holed in completely in his house in Bali - Douala “without going out” from

1960 to 1966. He however had remarried to a Fulbe, from Garoua, Addamary Belo Bouli in 1950. Alexander died in 1966, but his Fulbe bride had held on till 1994. They had no children.

When weighed against the great forces and events that crowded his life, Alexander Douala Manga Bell's story speaks for itself in life's uncertainty. Born in Douala in a house which at the time could evoke even the envy of a German like 'Herman Rohm, he went to Germany at the age of four into the royal care of a king assisted by a pastor of God. A soldier, drilled through all the usage and lifestyle of a German prince, he was able to speak several languages (German, French, English, Greek, Latin) and was an accomplished pianist and horseman. When the military fortunes of nations changed the map of the world, and the fate of men like King Kaiser William, Governor Ebermayer, Chief of District Rohm and the rest was torn to shreds by the violent storm of the first world war, when even colonialism which embraced a returning Alexander could hardly understand him, we can only sympathise with a man whom the wheel of fate had fired into an orbit beyond his control.



Prince Rene Douala Manga Bell (1927- ...) Surviving ruler of the Bell Dynasty which suffered diverse fortunes in the hands of succeeding European powers

In 1967, one year after his death, Alexander Ndoumbe Douala Manga Bell was succeeded by his nephew, Prince Rene Douala Manga Bell, as the Senior Chief of Douala and present head of the Bell dynasty. Prince Rene, now 72 (in 1999) is married to a medical practitioner. They have two sons and two daughters.

Cameroon Youths in Berlin, 1902



In Berlin, 1902, Alexander Douala Manga Bel/ at five poses with Pastor Scheve who looked after him under the supervision of King William II. L to R front row: Titi a Kony, Bertha Mbenge, Rudolf Nkom, Carl Steane. L to R middle row: Obouf Manga Bell, Alexander Manga Bel/, Pastor Scheve. L to R back row: Rion Manga Bel/, Rudolf Manga Bell, Bruno Muloby

The First Thirteen

While I was working on my Cameroon Political story, two significant events concerning two of my characters - Dr. Endeley and S.T. Muna overtook me. Both men, who had commenced parliamentary politics in the year 1952, surprisingly ended their careers as parliamentarians in the same year of 1988. This gives a staggering thirty-six years of unbroken parliamentary membership to their credit, and the strange coincidence both in their entry and in their exit from parliament apart, something even more striking took place, on July 1st, 1988 at Buea.

On that day, Dr. E.M.L. Endeley was lying-in-state at Buea and one of those who spoke at his grave side was the towering Solomon Tandeng Muna travelling all the way from Mbengwi in the North West Province, to come and pay his last respects to a departed comrade. Of course, I too was there to say my own “Adieu” to the man I had closely known for forty years from 1948.

If any reader of what I write here should wonder why I discuss these two names together, this is my answer: It was to me the height of tragedy to see these two political giants together on July 1st 1988 at Buea, one journeying to the great beyond, the other weeping by the side of a passing friend.

The scene very much resembled a story out of the books of the Greek mythologies, a giant weeping by the side of a dead colleague. The difference lay in the fact that what was happening at Buea on that fateful day was not mythology; it was the harsh truth of the tragic drama of I our Muna weeping by the side of our dead Endeley. Those of us who watched this scene wept as well, but our tears went deeper than the normal sentiments of mourners at the passing of a member of a clan. They were tears being shed by many who saw the death of Doctor Endeley, so close to his exit from the National Assembly, and so close to the departure of S.T. Muna from that same Assembly, virtually as the sad end of an era that once was.

Beyond the gloom that was so manifest at this touching scene, who could guess where our staggering steps next led? Amongst this lot, I

stood conspicuous. I had been there in January 1952 when our parliamentary march began, as the original thirteen representatives from the then Trust Territory of Southern Cameroons set out to take their seats in the Eastern House of Assembly at Enugu. We were thirteen:

Endeley, Motomby, Mbile, Charley, George, Forju, Muna, Lainjo, Foncha, Kangsen, Ndi, Ndze and Ngala; a solid team that was once nicknamed the “Cameroon bloc.” That was thirty-six years ago, and many have gone since then.

First went Martin Forju of Mamfe, followed by S.A. George of the same Division. J.T. Ndze went next, then Motomby Woleta in March 1962, just in time to evade the franc. Richard Charley took his turn and we thought we had lost enough. But, no, Sama Ndi and Jerry Kangsen, all of Wum later joined the train. As if to keep up the pace of the passing of these first thirteen, Dr. Endeley’s date followed close to that of Rt. Reverend Moderator Jerry Kangsen. Theirs were only months apart. The pace has been fast indeed especially amongst those from the forest zone. Here, five out of six have gone beyond, but of the seven from the Northwest, Muna, Foncha¹¹, Lainjo and Ngala still trudge along. I join my weary steps with them.

In thirty-six years the first thirteen had come to five and none did die at a ripe old age. Though Dr. Endeley made seventy two, Motomby Woleta was a bare thirty eight when his gastric ulcer exploded at the Victoria General Hospital in March 1962. S.A. George and Martin Forju did not make it fifty when they went, while Richard Charley got to sixty but in failing health at his closing years. John Ndze did not make it fifty when he died while Sama Ndi and Jerry Kangsen just earned the name that they died old men. So, that’s the story of the first thirteen and when Muna wept as Endeley slept, he shed the tears of a thousand men. Indeed, the death of Dr. Endeley did not only mark the passing of a political giant, it heralded the closing phase of an era that once was.

The superstitious do not like the number thirteen. I am not one of them. But the story of the first thirteen men from our British Cameroons who won the title of “Honourable Member” runs very close to a tragic tale. Indeed judged by all we have seen of the political

¹¹ By the time the manuscript of this was written, Foncha was still alive.

leadership bequeathed by them, I am most tempted to close of them in a sense of tragedy.

As if the number thirteen had not finished playing mischief with the story and fate of our British Cameroons, that number popped up again in 1960, when J .M. Boja crossed to the CPNC side, leaving the House equally divided thirteen-thirteen amongst its elected members. The effort to move out of that stalemate through the use of one David Frambo may have changed the course of the political fate of Southern Cameroons; had it not floundered through the fickle mindedness of Frambo. One can see even here, how the number thirteen kept playing pranks with our fate, and how that number can hardly be forgotten in the political story of Cameroon.

Motomby-Woleta Was My Friend

Peter Ndemba Motomby Woleta was thirty-eight when he passed away at Victoria in March 1962, making his year of birth, 1924. His village home was Great Soppo just south of Buea noted for the migratory spirit of its people many of whom strongly moved to Likomba, Tiko, Victoria and elsewhere from their base on the southern slope of Mount Cameroon. Paul Esaso, the Bakweri historian also hailed from this village, and was a relation of Peter. His father Pa Henry Motomby was a Government school teacher marked for his cool disposition, soft-spoken English and the special ability to handle infants. Little wonder that Peter easily took to some of his father's gifts in a fast education that soon found him obtaining his First School Leaving Certificate at the Baptist School Soppo about 1938 and proceeding to the Baptist Boys' High School, Abeokuta, Nigeria, for his college training.

On completion from Abeokuta with a Senior Cambridge Certificate, he first got a job at Sapele a town in the Niger Delta. He did not last here as the spirit of home kept urging him eastward towards the place of his birth, to the green fields of the Cameroon Development Corporation. In the sprawling CDC the haven of opportunity for many a Cameroonian, Motomby secured a clerical job in the Medical Department at Tiko. Here his talent soon found expression, and in no time he had become an active spokesman for his fellow workers on top of his job. His fellow workers indeed found him a strong convincing debater with a good command of the English

language, qualities that pointed to a coming position of leadership.

The Richards Constitution had just given way to the more advanced Macpherson era with elections through divisional electoral meetings for choosing Assemblymen. It seems to me that the alert brain of young Motomby had quickly seen the coming events, and returned home just in time, to find himself a fitting candidate from the plantations to run for a seat to the Eastern House of Assembly at Enugu. Indeed, so it happened, and in December 1951, Motomby-Woleta won through the primaries in the Tiko plains, and emerged amongst those who stood in chase of one of the two seats for Victoria Division to the Eastern House. The final count showed Dr. E.M.L. Endeley and Peter Ndemba Motomby Woleta elected to the House of Assembly. Thus began his parliamentary career for eleven years. So, in 1952, Peter was amongst the thirteen Cameroon Assemblymen to Enugu. One of his stumbling blocks against reaching the House of Representatives, Lagos, was the fact that he and Dr. Endeley both came from Victoria Division. The NCNC parliamentary group had decided to ensure representation of the 29 divisions in the Region with at least one seat each, and Dr. Endeley took it for Victoria. Motomby had to be content with his seat in the House of Assembly at Enugu where his brilliance at public speaking soon made him a front bench member of the NCNC parliamentary group. Light cannot hide, and the appropriate time was indeed to arrive when Motomby Woleta would effectively be used by the NCNC party in the Eastern Region of Nigeria.

It would be recalled that the Eastern House of Assembly commenced in January 1952 and was dissolved on 6th May 1953, following the Eastern Crisis that has now gone into history. Motomby Woleta was one of the four Assemblymen who had remained faithful to the NCNC, when the Cameroon bloc split over the policy of benevolent neutrality. He had thundered, "Cameroon is not hydra headed, to shoot one head out, at Enugu, and a different head in Lagos, I support Mbile's stand and shall remain faithful to the NCNC cause." Motomby was indeed a pillar of strength to my side in the split with Endeley and as General Secretary of the KPP he was a formidable asset to the party. His courage showed right through the conflict and even more when we all lost our seats on the KPP platform at the October 26 elections in 1953.

You can imagine my relief when, soon after we lost, the NCNC

which had swept the rest of the Eastern Region defeating every one of those “sit tight ministers” readily placed us as members of certain Boards. Motomby Woleta was made Chairman of the Eastern Region Development Board. This position boosted our group’s position tremendously and he acquitted himself most creditably in the post. I was made a member of the Cinema Corporation of Nigeria. From these vantage points, we of the KPP were able to rally and regroup despite our 1953 defeat. Motomby bought a press and we launched the *Cameroon Champion*, one of our first newspapers west of the Mungo.

At the 1957 elections to the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly, both Motomby and I won our seats, he defeating Mr. E.K. Martin of the KNC in the Victoria South constituency and I, knocking out J .M. Bokwe in the Kumba West constituency. Motomby and I now therefore faced Endeley square across the floor of the Cameroons House of Assembly. Motomby was a master craftsman in parliamentary debate, in real command of the English language. So brilliant was this man that Justice Sainsbury, Speaker of the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly, once wrote out a personal commendation to Motomby. Hon. Motomby Woleta had written to the Commissioner of the Cameroons asking for the KNDP and KPP which had won seven out of the thirteen elected seats to be called upon to form the Government. The Commissioner replied that since the six N.A. seats had declared for Dr. Endeley’s KNC, he was properly controlling a majority of the members of the House of Assembly, and therefore was qualified to be Leader of Government Business. As soon as we won our seats into the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly we immediately relinquished our Board appointments, as these were incompatible with the holding of our parliamentary seats. In 1959, the KNC/KPP alliance had fought the KNDP party, losing narrowly by 12:14. Foncha became Prime Minister. Again in 1958, Motomby and I escorted our two Cameroons Beauty Queens (Nene Etule and Ruth Ndando) from Tiko to Lagos for the Nigeria wide contest organised by the *Daily Times*, to select a “Miss Nigeria 1958.” Nene Etule won, beating thirteen other Queens from Eastern, Western, and Northern Nigeria. As part of her price, Nene Etule visited the USA and she sang in Harlem. Motomby Woleta and Meyer Ikome were both travelling to Holland for a Cooperatives Conference, while I was journeying to the USA on an award from the State Department under the United States Foreign Leader Exchange

Program. While in Lagos, where we witnessed Nene win the Nigeria Beauty Contest, we sought audience to talk to Sir Ralph Grey, Chief Secretary to the Nigerian Government. We discussed the impending plebiscite' and explained to Sir Grey why we could not countenance a third option for Southern Cameroons. We believed in building a great country for the children of Cameroon, not an impotent midget state lying between two large neighbours like another Holland and Belgium between Germany and France. We also saw reason to cross the flooded streams best, when the stronger people (Nigeria and the Cameroon Republic, all in 1960) were crossing.

When in 1960, J.M. Boja crossed from the KNDP to make us thirteen-thirteen, Motomby was one of our heavy anchors that prevented us from drifting below this limit. He was an honest and dependable comrade whom money or lust for office could not buy. His historic demonstration of this was When Kale, Leader of KPP sent a secret message from the KN.D.P. offering him a ministerial post if he could cross to their side during our 1959 12:14 loss to them. Motomby *did* not only turn down the offer, but rang me to come down to Victoria for an urgent KPP Executive meeting. The KPP Exco tried Kale for "betrayal of his own party cause." Kale pleaded guilty and stepped down from leadership of the KPP I was immediately made leader of the KPP, until we founded the CPNC in 1960. Motomby was indeed a great character and had *led* the prosecution of *Kale* during the trial.

When the KNC/KPP alliance merged into one party, the CPNC, Motomby *Woleta* became *general* Secretary, *Endeley* Leader, I Deputy Leader. Had the hand of an *early* death not stepped *into* the *life* of hi there I knowing at *friend only one year my* what height Peter Motomby *Woleta ftmim-ioage*. He *passed lolh*, would have been swung by the *greatbeyondioMarch.1962*. Cameroon *political pendulum*. We fought the 1961 elections of an *enlarged* House of 37 seats, where the KNDP had recarved constituencies to *give* them a win even before the votes were counted. Motomby *lost* to an unknown *political quantity*, Liflo Carr, in the constituency of Victoria *mutilated almost* beyond recognition from its original form. Of the nine seats Won by the CPNC four crossed to the KNDP side, *almost* each being made a minister. *Only* five men stayed on to face Foncha's KNDP which had taken such *control* of the horseshoe Southern Cameroons House of *Assembly* chambers, that *only* a tip of the horseshoe was left for the surviving CPNC men (Endeley,

Mbile, Tamfu Elangwe, Monyongo).



Motomby-Woleta was my friend. Only one year my junior in age, he passed to the great beyond in March, 1962.

Motomby-Woleta from his Victoria home could certainly not have enjoyed the spate of carpet crossings that had reduced his party to what now remained of it. Cut off from the wrestling ground by the wall that again stood between him and the House of Assembly for at least another five years, little wonder that Hon. Motomby-Woleta's gastric ulcer exploded, and he passed away in March, 1962, only weeks' to the arrival of the CFA franc in Southern Cameroons as legal tender. He was survived by his darling wife, Bertha Motomby-Woleta and a number of children.

Motomby-Woleta was not only a political comrade to the last, he was my friend. May his soul rest in peace.

Uncle Paul Came and Went

I first met P.M. Kale in Lagos in 1947, when he was the Headmaster of the Salvation Army School there:

Hitherto, I had known the man whom we later fondly called Uncle Paul, only by name, as the President of the Cameroons Youth League, Lagos, with Dr. E.M.L. Endeley as the Secretary General. An impressive personality standing some six feet off the ground, P.M.

Kale arrived Lagos from home where he had been a teacher under the then Basel Mission. He got caught, into the general political awakening that afflicted Africa after the Second World War, and soon found himself politically at the feet of the venerable Herbert Macauley of Lagos and Nnamdi Azikiwe, two men who are credited with the leadership of political- awareness and activity in Nigeria from the forties. They launched the NCNC (National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons), with Herbert Macauley as President and Azikiwe as General Secretary, the last “C” in NCNC brought in by Kale’s Cameroons Youth League, one of its affiliated organizations.

In 1947, the NCNC sent a delegation to London to complain about a number of obnoxious bills credited to the then Legislative Council of Nigeria, Lagos, and to ask for repeal of the Richard’s Constitution, whose unpopular feature was the element of nominated representatives. They also asked for consideration of a date for self-Government or independence for Nigeria from Her Majesty’s Government of the United Kingdom. Under the leadership of Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe the other members of the delegation were Dr. Olorun Nimbe, Prince Adeleke Adedoyin, Chief Nyong Esien, Mallam Abubakar Dipcharima, Mrs. Ransome Kuti and Mr. P.M. Kale. Mr. Arthur Creech Jones, Colonial Secretary in Clement Atlee’s Labour Government received the delegation and advised them to return and co-operate with Governor Arthur Richards. Soon in 1948, Arthur Richards was recalled, and Sir John Stuart Macpherson was appointed Governor of Nigeria. Meanwhile, P.M. Kale was sent to Britain by the Salvation Army to do a course of study leading to a Diploma in Education. Whether the Salvation Army had sent Kale to Britain to distract him from politics or whether he earned it in return for satisfactory service we may never know. What we firmly know is that the political embers that had been kindled in P.M. Kale only fired him on in the struggle against British colonialism and for the black man to end being only a hewer of wood and a drawer of water.

While in Britain, P.M. Kale did not forget his Salvation Army assignment and came back after three years with his Diploma in Education. The political fire in him only grew stronger, to the point where despite his appointment on return as Supervisor of Salvation Army schools, Eastern Region of Nigeria, his real longing was to come back to the Cameroons, to join its restless youth, as leader of the Kamerun Peoples Party (KPP). Of course while in Britain he was every

Sunday at Hyde Park Comer, where the voices of Jomo Kenyatta and Kwame Nkrumah were often heard, calling for the shackles of British colonialism in Africa to end.

The echoes of these voices of black speakers at London Hyde Park Comer followed Kale to Eket, his Salvation Army job site, until in May 1953, a delegation of Cameroons Assemblymen (N.N. Mbile, P.N. MotombyWoleta, Chief R.N. Charley, and Prince Sarna Ndi) arrived to offer him leadership of the Kamerun Peoples Party (KPP) which was ranged against the Kamerun National Congress (KNC) led by Dr. E.M.L. Endeley.

Uncle Paul received us warmly at Eket and accepted what we had come to offer him. It was however, no easy task that faced him in a leadership that implied immediate and outright war with Dr. Endeley who was then at the height of his political days as leader of the KNC P.M. Kale was indeed a man of courage in accepting to lead the KPP underdog with only four Assemblymen, against nine on Endeley's side, more so as Endeley had become a virtual legend amongst Cameroonians though to a lesser degree amongst Bakweris of whom Kale and Motomby- Woleta were strongly numbered.

The delegation left Eket fully agreed on our plans Kale was going to resign from his job and join us home later. Indeed so it happened, and we received Mr. Kale at Victoria when he sailed in later in 1953, giving him the welcome of a hero to the Fatherland. Soon we were out on campaign in the elections to the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly billed for 26th October, 1953. Uncle Paul was a tower of strength and an inspiration to the KPP boys and girls, even though at the election count, KPP lost totally to the KNC. The anti-Ibo propaganda was too strong for the KPP which was pictured as a pro-Ibo party.

Picking up the pieces after our 1953 defeat, Uncle Paul and his KPP continued the fight against the KNC. In 1955, we registered a major blow against our opponents when a huge slice of the KNC became KNDP through the defection of J.N. Foncha and A.N. Jua. It now became a three-cornered fight, with the KNDP of Foncha and Jua striking at Endeley's KNC in the northern front of the Bamenda highlands, while the KPP concentrated our fire at the southern forest sector. The result of the new fighting showed at the 1957 elections. KNC won six, KNDP five and KPP two of the thirteen elected seats to the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly. Endeley's KNC was

only saved by the six N.A. (Native Authority) members who all supported the KNC in the House. Even though P.M. Kale lost to Dr. Endeley in the Victoria North West constituency, his KPP party now controlled two seats in the House and the best two parliamentarians in Southern Cameroons. He led his party in the London constitutional conferences of 1957 and 1958. He also got appointed Chairman of the Southern Cameroons Scholarship Board. Clearly, Uncle Paul was on the way up in the politics of Southern Cameroons.

In March 1958, S.T. Muna's earlier resignation from the KNC forced Dr. Endeley and the KPP to consider a coalition Government, more so as on May 15th of that year, Dr. E.M.L. Endeley was sworn in as Premier of Southern Cameroons. Kale's position improved considerably. His party was now in Government; he was Chairman of the Scholarship Board and was enjoying universal personal respect. Kale's Deputy Leader in the KPP (N.N. Mbile) was appointed Minister of Works and Transport in the Endeley Government of 15th May 1958.

Unfortunately, the KNC/KPP marriage turned out one of convenience that did not reach our hearts. At least so did our action portray at the moment of trial when we faced the 1959 elections to the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly. In Victoria South East (Tiko) the KNC and KPP allies failed to field a joint candidate, the KNC fielding Dipoko and KPP fielding Nambille. All effort to pressure the KNC leadership to concede the seat to KPP proved fruitless and the KNDP candidate, Monono, a technician in CDC Tiko won the seat.

In the Victoria North West Constituency (Buea) it is to the credit of P.M. Kale that he stepped down for Dr. Endeley who won it easily. At the final count, P.M. Kale felt most disappointed with the KNC leadership, and he left his once dear KPP party. Later he joined the KNDP after leading the KPP from 1953 to 1959. I became KPP leader both in Parliament and out (a situation I had virtually held except in name) at the exit of Kale.

Uncle Paul staggered a while after his resignation from the KPP, during which time he attempted to form a party (K.U.P.) but it hardly took off the ground. The crucial elections of 1959, which gave Foncha the 14:12 seat victory over Endeley taught us lessons, both bitter and sweet. We learnt perhaps too late that an ally though a junior partner in Government deserved more regard and sincerity than the KNC gave KPP. Hastily, we dissolved the two parties in 1960, and launched the

Cameroon Peoples National Convention (CPNC). Kale's departure from our side touched me heavily. We had fought for too long together. In 1958 I had resolved to join him on a fifteen-day voyage from Tiko to Bristol, rather than a few hours flight from Tiko to London. He hated flying due to a cardiac problem. We had shared great moments together. In 1957 after the London Constitutional Conference, we had travelled to Switzerland on the invitation of one Hans Meyer of Vilmergen, an industrialist. We virtually exhausted the pleasure spots of that part of Switzerland in two weeks of holiday. So close had we grown together with Uncle Paul that even when he left us for new political friends of the KNDP, I was still often seen by him sharing a chat and/or a drink at the Buea Mountain Club. When he was proposed Speaker of the House, even though he had not been elected a member, the CPNC opposition gave him full support to earn him one hundred percent acceptance by the House.



P.M. Kale: Speaker, Southern Cameroon House of Assembly. Leader of KPP 1953-1959. Joined KNDP in 1959

His towering personality and pleasant manners, coupled with his mellow years made him a gentleman everywhere. His spirit of compromise and true patriotism showed out best when in 1960 there was the four-day conference in London to reconsider our position vis-

à-vis the 1961 plebiscite. Uncle Paul threw his full diplomatic weight for compromise, but the new Foncha demand of a “parting gift” not P.M. Kilre: Speaker, Southern Cameroon House only shocked the British but of Assembly Leader of disappointed P.M. Kale. In this he was KPP 1953-1959. Joined not alone on their side. A.N. Jua shared KNDP in 1959 this stand to the point of threatening resignation from the KNDP The Bamenda mammals in Buea however threatened to nude, and Jua backed down.

Both Kale and Jua had hoped something real good would come out of the November 1960 London talk, but Foncha appeared to have reached the point of no return. It was like a chicken trying to stop a cockfight, and so the plebiscite came and went on 11th February 1961. The results are now a matter into the history of a crucial period of the Cameroon Fatherland.

Paul Monyongo Kale was certainly a great actor in the several scenes of the Cameroon play in which many have performed their various parts. He ended his at the high note of Speaker of the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly as he passed beyond in August 1966. When all are put together, his life political and private, his effort and achievements, especially against his modest birth at Buea on the slopes of Mount Cameroon, it cannot be wrong to affirm that P.M. Kale died a great man.

An Era Passes (Dr E.M.L. Endeley, 1916-1988)

On the 29th Day of June 1988 at the mountain town of Buea an event of the utmost tremor shook the political foundation of the Cameroon like one of the periodic eruptions of Mount Cameroon such as Hannibal saw. The only difference between what Hannibal recorded during his explorations as “the flaming chariot of the gods,” and what the people of Cameroon bore testimony to, on the 29th June, that year, is that Hannibal saw Mount Cameroon itself belching red hot larva out of its over heated bowels, whilst what the people of Cameroon saw on this more recent event was the passing of a man, Dr. Endeley.

In effect, both events produced the same eruptive force, one from the violent anger of the sleeping volcano, the other from the wrath and anguish of the Bakweris in particular and Cameroonians in general at the passing of a political giant who had been reared on the slopes of that unpredictable mountain.

Doctor Emmanuel Lifafa Mbella Endeley of Cameroon political

fame, whose historic exploits date back to the forties and whose name had become a household word in Cameroon, died at his home in Buea at 5:00 p.m. on 29th June 1988. He was born in 1916, a year significant for being the period when the British commenced occupation of their part of the Cameroon, following the collapse of William Kaiser's forces in the territory during the First World War. It was therefore a strange coincidence that Dr. Endeley, born when the British took Cameroon from the Germans, spent the best of his seventy-two years on earth, in the struggle against the British as if to avenge the German defeat. No, his was for a different cause, for a different purpose. He was against British colonial tutelage; his was for African political emancipation.

Drilled through the British colonial education system that was noted for its thoroughness and efficiency, Dr. Endeley came back to Buea first as a young Assistant Medical Officer and later in 1947, when fate ordered him back to the land of his birth. It is then in 1949 that Dr. Endeley and some Cameroonians formed the Cameroon National Federation, which succeeded the Cameroon Youth League as a new forum for the expression of prevailing political grievances. He became General Secretary of the CDC Workers Union (1947-1949), President of the Union (1949-1950) and a member of the CDC Board (1950-1951).

In December 1951, he was elected with Peter Motomby-Woleta as one of the two Assemblymen from Victoria Division (now Fako) to the Eastern House of Assembly at Enugu amongst the thirteen pioneers of Southern Cameroons Parliamentary Politics. He proceeded to the House of Representatives in Lagos and was Minister without Portfolio in the Cabinet of Sir John Macpherson, along with A.C. Nwapa, Dr. Eni Njoku and Okoi Arikpo representing the NCNC controlled Eastern Region in the Federal Government of Nigeria. He once acted as Federal Minister of Labour.

Then in 1953, as from October 26th, Dr Endeley was appointed leader of Government Business, following his landslide KNC victory against his KPP opponents. On May 15th 1958, he became First Premier of Southern Cameroons heading the KNC/KPP coalition Government until January 1959 when J.N. Foncha's KNDP won the 1959 elections by the slim margin of 14:12. From then he became leader of the opposition in the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly, until the birth of the CNU brought all parties under one

umbrella in Cameroon and Dr. Endeley became leader of the Parliamentary Party in Buea at cabinet rank.

Following the abolition of the Federal System of Government in the Federal Republic of Cameroon in 1972, Dr. Endeley was elected through the CNU list system to the National Assembly Yaounde and held this parliamentary seat till the National elections when Hon. Ikundi took it.

He was a member of the Central Committee of the CNU (now CPDM) and was elected Section President for Fako Division until the later holder of the post, S.M.L. Endeley, his brother came along. Dr. Endeley was a brilliant speaker and was at his best when provoked, or when defending himself against assailants.

His charming personality and charisma coupled with a sound British grounded education stood him in good stead to the end of his days. Amongst his best attributes in a long public career must be his remarkable adaptation to rugged African politics' against his basic grooming as a flying technocrat of the British system in Africa, his great regard for basic human rights; his fanatic love of parliamentary politics.

As borne out in the funeral speeches of his bewildered relatives, friends and well wishers who gathered at Buea to mourn the passing of a real political giant, of his failures, we might record the sad fact that as many of his African political colleagues living and dead had painfully experienced, the end result of his political adventures fell far short of his original cause and dreams.

Dr. Endeley's exit leaves a political vacuum in Cameroon impossible to fill this century and if the present trends are anything to go by, may never be filled.

Following so close to his own exit as well as that of S.T. Muna from the National Assembly, Dr. Endeley's death marks not only the passing of a life, but the sad end of a onetime glorious political era.

I write not of Dr. Endeley from hearsay or handed down stories; I write of the man from my first hand knowledge of him. I was General Secretary when he was President of the Cameroon National Federation (1949-1951), I was the General Secretary when he was President of the CDC Workers Union (1949-1950), I was a member of his cabinet when he was Premier of Southern Cameroons (1958). In 1960-1965, I was Deputy Leader of the Opposition and of the CPNC while he was leader. I was there, and I knew the man. May his soul rest in peace.

Foncha Has a Place

Of course; in the Cameroon political scheme of things, John Ngu Foncha has his place. I knew John Ngu Foncha as far back as 1948, when I visited Bamenda with Mr. Laban Namme, as we toured the territory to announce the coming of the projected *Cameroon Voice*.

He was Headmaster of the Catholic School, Mankon, and was one known leading “politician” in the Bamenda area as President of the Bamenda Youth Association. This body organised the reception to Bamenda of Dr. Nnamndi Azikiwe in 1946, when he toured the country preparatory to the departure to London of the NCNC delegation in the summer of 1947. That delegation met Arthur Creech Jones, British Colonial Secretary, on the questions of Nigeria’s constitutional advance and her date for independence.

Mr Foncha received Mr. Namme and me during our 1948 visit and arranged a meeting for us at the Mankon Catholic hall, where we addressed a gathering on the proposed newspaper. Naturally we talked on the current political issues of the day and the relevant Cameroon aspirations of the time. Foncha impressed us as a budding politician with a dedication. Having been trained at St. Charles College Onitsha Foncha could not escape that influence of Zik’s teachings.

When therefore J.N. Foncha’s name came out at the 1951 General Elections as one of the successful candidates to the Eastern House of Assembly Enugu from Bamenda Division, it was joy to me, for this is the man I knew. As we the thirteen convoyed to Enugu, it was then I met for the first time the rest of the other Bamenda Province members, except Prince Sarna Ndi whom I had known while in college at Calabar. My early contact with Foncha created a special place in my heart for a man who despite his simple ways had shown himself as one of conviction in the African cause for freedom from foreign rule. While a good many of the others ran for election as a means of moving forward to satisfy ambition, this simple soft-spoken man had won my heart. Many at the time could hardly identify with the cause of the NCNC and Zik, when Uncle Tom’s, saw that as a danger to their service under the almighty “white man.”

My personal attachment to Foncha came out best in June 1952, after our first meeting of the Eastern House of Assembly at Enugu. This was when one Nyo had filed a complaint against Hon. J.N.

Foncha and Mr. Ngante alleging “breaking and stealing” of his money and property. Hon Foncha had reported the problem to the thirteen of us early in January 1952 at Enugu, and we all promised to be in Bamenda during Foncha’s trial. Strangely when the matter became ripe in June, I found myself the only member who travelled to Bamenda to be by his side. I put up with him in his house at the Catholic Mission Mankon for two weeks during the courts sitting under His Worship Magistrate Savage. As we awaited the day of trial, we occupied our time in telling stories, rehearsing the case, and cracking groundnuts of his year’s harvest from their shells. We just dropped the shells on the floor as we released the nuts and threw them into a basket, the shells forming a virtual carpet under our feet until they were swept away. During our rehearsals, I played the role of a lawyer at one time and magistrate at another, imagining questions and their answers.

On the trial day itself we rose early, dressed and breakfasted. From Foncha’s residence, we slowly climbed the steep escarpment to the Magistrate Court in the Bamenda Fort. I took a seat on one of the benches in the court but I soon found Hon. Foncha with whom we had together scaled the heights of the Bamenda Fort, not by me. I then remembered that I had seen a police man talking with him out of the hall, and he was not yet back. The Magistrate could arrive any time and so I went to find out what was happening to my friend. Fancy my surprise when I got to the police section of the Fort to find Hon. Foncha sitting on a stone along with a number of other accused persons waiting for their cases. Mr. Foncha whispered to me that the procedure there was for all accused people to sit on one of those stones along the gutter of the eaves of the “charge office” while waiting for their cases to be called.

I was furious and stormed into the office of the Superintendent of Police (an English man) to protest against the treatment to Hon. Foncha by making him sit on a stone. There was space on the bench in the court where I sat, and I was requesting his permission for Hon. Foncha to join me in the court. The Superintendent after explaining that it was a practice he had met, for all criminal cases to wait on the stones, allowed Mr. Foncha to me as a favour. I thanked the officer and moved with my friend from the stone.

When the case was called up I discovered a second accused, (Mr Ngante, a senior nurse in Bamenda General Hospital) standing with Foncha in the accused box. Unknown to me, Mr. Ngante had been

sitting on a stone at the “charge office” while I was fighting the case of his colleague. My friend had not told me there was another.

The case itself was a walkover for Hon. Foncha as it collapsed with the prosecution unable even to make a “prima facie” case. Mr. Nyo the first prosecution witness and complainant failed woefully to convince the court on his allegations against the accused persons. Hon. Foncha and Mr. Ngante were not even put in the witness box and were acquitted and discharged. Our small group of the Foncha clan climbed down from the Fort singing our victory, to the Catholic Mission. The Foncha house was a scene of singing and merriment that evening, while many thanked me for virtually performing a lawyer’s role in the matter. Do not ask me therefore why I counted on Foncha’s support during my break with Endeley in 1953, and why I wonder after forty years, if Dr. Foncha still remembers the Nyo case and the contribution I made in it.

The high points of J.N. Foncha can be summarised as follows:

- In December 1951 he, Muna and Lainjo were elected from Bamenda Division to the Eastern House of Assembly Enugu.

- In 1955 he and Augustine Ngom Jua broke off from Endeley’s KNC to form the KNDP party.

- In 1959 Foncha wrested power from Endeley and was sworn in as Premier of Southern Cameroons. Women voted for the first time.

- At independence in 1961, he became Vice President of the Federal Republic of Cameroon with Ahmadou Ahidjo as President.

- Later Mr. S.T. Muna who had joined Foncha’s KNDP in 1958, from Endeley’s KNC replaced J.N. Foncha as Vice President of the Republic.

- Hon. Foncha received an Honorary Doctorate Degree in Law from St. John’s University - New York, in recognition of his political achievements. If Cameroonians do not appreciate the worth of their leaders, others may do so.

- All said and done, we cannot fail to hail John Ngu Foncha as a hero in our Cameroon political history.

- Despite faltering steps he is an acknowledged champion of Cameroon unification.

From a humble village boy he acquired an education praiseworthy at his time, when a Grade II Teacher’s Certificate was for the best.

When parliamentary politics arrived, he was one of the first thirteen in our British Cameroons, rising to Prime Minister and Vice President of the Cameroon Republic after independence. Indeed in our Cameroon political history, John Ngu Foncha has a place.

Twenty Years in the Wilderness (1972 -1992)

In January 1972, Mr. S.T. Muna Prime Minister of West Cameroon enjoyed the singular distinction of dropping me from his cabinet in a single man reshuffle. Mr. L.E. Nwalipenja from my same Batanga clan of Ndian took my place. Inwardly I quietly felt that Mr. Muna in effect had only dropped Peter to take Paul, as far as the Batanga and the Oroko were concerned. When my clans people asked me to explain, I informed them that in politics one must be prepared to come and go as the gods of political fortunes dictate. After all, was Nwalipenja not just another Mbile? “In any case,” I said to them, “you all know that a Batanga noble man dying does not say who had shot at him. He always says “I hit my toe on a stone.” This is because the Batanga hold that no one dies well, who leaves war behind.

On May 20th 1972 in only a brief four months of my departure as Secretary of State, the unitary system came and West Cameroon as a political entity ceased to exist. The Government as well as the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly members packed off to their various destinations and pursuits. On my part, I went back to my farm, a calling bequeathed from our ‘forebears in which few Cameroonians receive formal training. To keep me more active than a cocoa farm and an oil palm holding require, I had to organise a small business on my own initiative in quarrying of sand and gravel and supplying to those who needed them for their building and other purposes. I had deliberately organised this particular business rather than be a contractor as some friends had advised. They were sure that the engineers in the PWD where I had been their Minister would readily give me contracts.

I rejected this advice for the simple reason that I could not see myself cringing for jobs before my former boys, to their obvious embarrassment and daily standing before the Finance and Treasury people to painfully clear my vouchers. Against the number of political “enemies” that politicians generally pile up, I chose to start such business from which I could depend on both friend and foe, and so it

came to pass. In my resolve to run a dependable enterprise in sand and gravel, I got jobs from all irrespective of their political leaning.

One day I was at my sand and gravel pit in the forest of Mbalangi when I saw a young man before me as I sat on a log of wood, watching the boys at work. He greeted and informed me that he was the driver of Mr. Nangah, the businessman who had sent him to call me. "Where is Mr. Nangah?" I asked. "He is by your car on the road," the young man answered. Soon we were both out on the road, and a smiling Nangah walked up and embraced me.

"We are very proud of you Sir," Mr. Nangah said, "That you can work this way for an honest living makes us regard you no less than when you were Minister." He opened his brief case, brought out his chequebook and wrote out a cheque to me for 250,000FCFA. "Sir, this is for you to supply sand to its value, at CCAS Kumba, where I have won the contract to build the college." I thanked him for the gesture, and of course faithfully supplied the material he had paid for. Nangah died a loving friend of mine, and distance could not deter me from paying him my last respects when he passed away at his home in Bamenda. From one used tipper I had bought from Pamol for two hundred thousand francs, I had run up to my fifth tipper by the time destiny and fate moved me on to another stage in my unfolding drama of life.

I was somewhere at Fiango Kumba while the mechanics were attending to my faithful land rover which I had christened "TAKE COURAGE." A small boy came up to me to say that his master was calling for me. "What does he want me for?" I queried. The boy answered, "They have heard your name on the radio and they want to tell you." "What have they heard about me on the radio, my interest rising?" "They say they heard Mr. Mbile CDC, Mr. Mbile CDC." However crudely put, it appeared some message was waiting for me. I cleared the end of my glass of beer and moved to the garage, where the boys crowded me with "congratulation, congratulation" and broke the news to me, that I had been appointed Chairman of the Cameroon Development Corporation. One of them said, "I heard it in the French news at one o'clock. They could not be wrong. The evidence was clear. From the time of the President's visit to Buea in 1987, I had received signs that comrade Paul Biya had taken note of me and I quickly remembered my friends in Yaounde, who certainly had put in a word for me. Thanking the boys and giving them a drink in celebration for

the happy news, I drove home where my family were waiting to congratulate me.

A new horizon had opened in my orbit along which I was now to spin, as Chairman, CDC. My appointment by Presidential decree dated 6th November 1992 abruptly ended my “20 years in the wilderness” (1972-1992). I soon met Mr. Peter Mafany Musonge, the General Manager CDC who received me as elder brother, friend and country man all bundled into one. He carefully put me through the paces guiding me respectfully along the requirements of my new job. His devotion to duty truly inspired me no less than my own talent and grasp may have struck him. CDC Board members have very often expressed satisfaction with the new relation which had arrived at the CDC Board generated by the Chief Executive of the Corporation.

Yes, light and talent like the sparkling pearl cannot evade the attention of men for long. I, myself, had long sensed something coming in the orbit of this younger friend and regular counsellor. I sometimes expressed in joke to him to hold himself in readiness for something bigger than what he held. What I failed to foresee was the actual size. of what was looming ahead, though eclipsed by the limitation of human vision. Indeed I felt the signs of it coming even as John the Baptist did of old. I only fell short of that divine extra of John which enabled him clearly foretell the coming of Christ.

That is why, when it happened, on the 19th day of September 1996, that the mantle of the land fell on Peter Mafany Musonge in the call to be Prime Minister and Head of Government of the Republic of Cameroon, my joy was great though I had surely seen the coming signs.

More Outstanding Actors

In closing this section of my twenty years in the’ wilderness of my wanderings and fortunes in the Cameroon political story, certain actors and characters have been conspicuous enough not to escape the record.

We may begin from the British Colonial days of Brigadier Gibbons and Mr. J.O. Field, as Commissioners of the Cameroons in the dying forties when the constitution of Governor Sir Arthur Richards, prominent for its unpopular system of nomination of representatives, gave way to that of Governor Sir John Stuart Macpherson in the arrival

of the principle of elections by the early fifties.

Then, followed the days of party politics in the fifties, with Dr. E.M.L. Endeley, J.N. Foncha, Augustine N. Jua, Solomon Tandeng Muna, P.M. Kale, Motomby-Woleta, Bernard Fonlon, E.T. Egbe, Ekangaki and many others who participated as strong actors in the play that hit a high applause on 11th February, 1961.

That was Plebiscite Day when Southern Cameroons joined their brothers east of the Mungo into a Federal Republic of Cameroon. The more than human size character of Ahmadou Ahidjo now stepped on the stage with J.N. Foncha by his side, and the world saw his days at the building and projection of the reborn Cameroon. In his effort at consolidating national unity, he launched the CNU (now CPDM) which operated a government with a single parliament for the nation.

Ahidjo's dramatic handing over to his Prime Minister Paul Biya in the early eighties brought in a character whose qualities his mentor had long discovered, and Paul Biya firmly took up the baton of command to further consolidate Cameroon national unity by transforming CNU to CPDM, creating the ten provinces under governors, as well as creating more administrative units to bring public service nearer the people. This stepped up development and dis-enclavement. A bold education programme addressed the problem of the youth as never before, with colleges in every administrative unit in the country and six universities in a row.

Though confronted with set-backs like the 1984 coup, the arrival of a global economic recession which could not spare Cameroon, as well as the costly pangs of return of multiparty politics, Paul Biya took his stride, scoring significantly before Africa and the watching world. His rating in the view of many was next only to Nelson Mandela. His able aides from Prime Minister Hayatou to Simon Achidi Achu to Peter Mafany Musonge all stood firmly by him in their steady turns.

Peter Mafany Musonge came in, in 1996, with a difference. Marching straight from the Cameroon Development Corporation where as General Manager he had succeeded to keep the CDC afloat when fellow agro industrial giants like V.A.C., Elders and Fyffes and Cadbury and Fry, to name only these few, had folded up. With his fresh burst of experience in handling crises from his CDC background, Peter Mafany Musonge stood firm by his President Paul Biya to sail through the stormy economic seas that rocked the world. These had not even spared the economic giants of Europe and America including

the vigorous Far Eastern states of Malaysia, Indonesia and Japan. In only two years by Biya's side, Musonge's policies were showing fruit in the unfolding Cameroon horizon by impressive economic signs of recovery.

Now, back to my puny humble self, in the midst of these giants in our story of half a century of the Cameroon political panorama, as it unfolded on the stage. I draw comfort and gratitude from destiny and fate which enabled me witness so great a part of the play. In this I am most minded to end my modest narrative with a sense of comedy drawn from one of William Shakespeare's plays – Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained.

Cameroon Republic Prime Ministers Row (1958 - 1999)



In 1985, a CNU Congress which held in Bamenda converted the Cameroon National Union into a new party renamed Cameroon People's Democratic Party (CPDM, RDPC for the French acronym). One reason that fitted out for the change appears to be the desire to shed off as much as could possibly be, of the old CNU complexion. This is understandable, judging from the unpleasant events during the transfer of regimes from Ahidjo to Biya - the attempt by Ahidjo to remain CPDM President, the coup and its aftermath.

Most Cameroonians therefore appreciated the spirit that moved the Bamenda Congress in 1985 to engage in that political metamorphosis, of our great national party. The CPDM reborn swept through the land with renewed vigour that brought a new dimension to the concept of a national party. All outlets to ensure the democratic operation of the organs and the institutions it forged for the state were progressively put in place. Critics of the national party idea who had feared that it may not guarantee democracy, found less reason to complain, as the new party within its organs from the cell to the Congress, insisted on applying democratic usages everywhere. Of course, all we did could not satisfy the critics, as they continued to accuse the party of running a dictatorship.

CPDM militants across the land therefore mounted an offensive against our critics through popular marches in support of our President and the national party concept. On our placards, we told the world that Cameroon stood firmly behind our national party idea contending that Cameroon was free to adapt the so called western democratic ideas to suit our local setting in Africa. We held these views through the late eighties on the debate concerning our practice or not of true democracy. Our critics however held on to one point that we finally had to concede.

Their point was that, it was not enough to claim that we were practicing democracy and carrying all Cameroonians in our bandwagon. What of those who differed? What free democratic society could exist, with no one saying "no"? Since the nature of man cannot be different in Cameroon from the rest of civilised man, how could we

claim that all Cameroonians stood only for CPDM “Surely, there were other Cameroonians who differed from the CPDM,” our critics contended. Why should those who differed not be allowed to voice their dissent? Against these views and arguments put up to counter our claims, and despite our marches and banner waving in support of “one party,” “one constitution,” “one people,” a day was soon to come when we were to agree to let the other side state its case.

Paul Biya Speaks For Democracy

As the CPDM climbed out of the eighties into this decade, the pressure of our critics within and outside the country could no longer be ignored and President Paul Biya conceded the point when, in June 1990, he admitted before an astonished nation, “we must be ready for competition.” This statement came very soon after our famous march following a meeting in the Pan African Institute, Buea. Governor John Ngole and Benjamin Itoe led the march as CPDM militants sang “Dima Bola.”

The effect of the President’s statement swept across the nation even as CPDM militants marched with banners in support of one national party. However and here, the CPDM displayed its quality of high discipline and loyalty to its leadership and constituted authority like a well-drilled army on the parade ground. The mighty forces of the CPDM party reeled round and made a complete about turn in its stand on the one party idea. “We must be ready for opposition” was re-echoed everywhere.

Multi-Parties Return

In 1990 Mr. John Fru Ndi of Bamenda launched his Social Democratic Front (SDF) party with such heat and fire that the effect left even the most ardent advocates of multi-parties awe stricken. Many have not and may never fully come round, to accepting that we were right to cave in on the question of multi-parties again. Not only did multi-parties return to Cameroon with fire and death on CPDM militants, but any who did not follow the new arrivals were not left in peace.



Ni John Fru Ndi, Leader of the Social Democratic Front (SDF) leading opposition to the Cameroon Government of President Paul Biya

Soon the nation found itself engulfed in a long drawn unofficial strike of taxi drivers that virtually paralysed the country's transport system. For a tedious six months, Cameroon was in the grip of an atmosphere totally in contradiction to the so-called freedom and democracy which multi-party politics were expected to bring. The worst hit were the militants of the CPDM governing party many of whom dared not as little as wear their party uniform. The North West Province followed by the West, South West and Littoral were the most turbulent and civil servants, especially administrative officers, had a difficult time.

A completely new and alarming complexion had come into our politics, burning, destruction and killing. Tyres were burnt in the streets, houses owned by CPDM members were set on fire with the inmates at times burnt alive. In Bamenda amongst the many houses burnt were those of Prime Minister Achidi Achu, Fon Angwafor and Hon. Peter Fomum. In particular Tita Fomukong of Bali was roasted alive in his burnt out house in Mankon. The general boycott ordered by the SDF opposition created such an impact on the economy of the country coupled with the then prevailing , world economic situation that the nation faced a near collapse, especially in the most affected provinces of the North West, West, Littoral and South West.

While most administrative officers in the country especially those of these trouble provinces along with the forces of law and order were under the severest strain, Governor Oben Peter Ashu of the South

West Province was easily the most outstanding administrator who rose to the occasion. The South West bravely contained the storm of the political opposition. Governor Bell Luc Rene of the North West, in his cool and yet effective approach appeared the man for the North West. Earlier, Governor John Ebong Ngole had held the North West during the height of the political troubles of that province, culminating to the parliamentary elections of 11th October, 1992, in which CPDM swept its entire 20 seats following the SDF boycott of those elections.

As if to put the people of Cameroon to the strictest test in their new embrace of democracy, a series of elections lined up. The first and most crucial was the Presidential elections of 1992. Before this time, the launching of new political parties had gained the momentum of a virtual flood in Cameroon, the National Union for Democracy and Progress (UNDP) led by Bouba Bello Maigari; the Union des Population du Cameroon (UPC) revived by Augustine Koddock from the South and Ndeh Ntumazah from Bamenda, was back again; Ndam Njoya of Bamoum launched his Cameroon Democratic Union (CDU). New political parties came up in such succession that most people have lost count as to whether they are now one hundred and fifty (150) or more. Surely we were reaching the point of absurdity in our number of political parties and men could not be wrong to say that democracy had turned amok in Cameroon.

The 1992 Presidential Elections attracted three major candidates; Paul Biya for CPDM, John Fru Ndi for the SDF and Bouba Bello Maigari for the UNDP. It was a hot contest, and those who judged by the size of the crowds in Bamenda, Bafoussam, Douala and even Yaounde thought Fru Ndi would carry the day. Such judges were unfortunately missing one element. At elections the large crowds may be one thing, the actual registered voters yet another while superior organisation and strategy may even be a more decisive factor. Bouba Bello, the second challenger was no small fry in the race and on the score of credentials, he was next only to Paul Biya the incumbent. Bouba Bello had been a Minister and a Prime Minister. John Fru Ndi possessed little known credentials, though he was a powerful crowd puller in many of the urban cities, a factor greatly influenced by our African politics of tribal compartments. One man; Governor Mofor of the East Province was so taken away by the prospect of a win for John Fru Ndi that he staked his job as Governor by resigning, in the hope of climbing into one of the cabinet seats in a Fru Ndi government. He

lost his bet and is reported to be now a refugee in the United States of America.

Indeed when the final count was taken and the Supreme Court as the final authority to pronounce results spoke out, it was Paul Biya the incumbent who carried the day with John Fru Ndi, a close second. Bouba Bello came third a good way down behind Paul Biya and Fru Ndi. Bouba Bello had counted on the powerful northern vote, which was largely denied him by the CPDM barons of that part of the Fatherland. This grand northern vote had provided the political base for Ahmadou Ahidjo during his time. With the area now divided into the provinces of Adamawa, North and Far North, that earlier solidarity which Ahidjo had enjoyed was now only a story of the past. Indeed, how else could it have been, given that it was Paul Biya who freed the Far North and Adamawa from the tentacles and clutches of Garoua to enjoy their present provincial autonomy, soon, to ripen into full regional status.

Paul Biya, cool and brave made little noise compared to the haughty claims and boasts of his challengers, and collected enough votes across the country to clinch victory. The Supreme Court despite threats from the opposition that had extensively used violence and intimidation on their opponents declared Paul Biya winner by a comfortable margin. The honest nation breathed relief and God was praised for sparing Cameroon the convulsions that had shattered Africa and buried millions. 'Few had any doubt that had Biya the man of peace not retained power, the fire eating new comers who had used violence so far to frighten people to their banners may have only been encouraged into the use of violence and blood to keep it: If the extent of violence during this period was any thing to go by, a win for the opposition would have spelt sure disaster for Cameroon and a period of uncertainty and darkness for one of Africa's nations of hope and promise, comparable only to the dark ages in history.

As if to keep up the pressure and subject Cameroon to the severest test during this return of multi-parties, a number of elections came up in quick succession;

- Parliamentary Elections of 1st March 1992,
- Presidential Elections of 11th October 1992,
- Municipal Elections of 21st January 1996,
- Second Parliamentary Elections of 17th May, 1997

- Culminating to the last Presidential Elections of 12th October, 1997.

Cameroonians went virtually through hell, in all these stormy controversial elections. Property was often destroyed and lives lost through burning mostly by those out to wrest power by hook or by crook. Naturally those who held it stood firm in refusing to hand over the fate of thirteen million Cameroonians into the unsure hands of the opposition adventurers. In each case the CPDM national party led by Paul Biya carried the day. Many of the more than one hundred political parties that had formed, soon began falling by the way side. There were even the extreme cases of a lawyer who formed a party limited only to his chambers (he was president and his pupil lawyer the secretary). There was the other example of two brothers of the same father and mother, each forming a party. When the registering authorities found this strange anomaly, they asked the younger brother to join his elder brother's party which had already been registered. The younger brother insisted on registering his party; the authorities stood their ground and rejected his application. Then, there was the case of a Mr. John, a village farmer who came up to register a party. The authorities found him a man of straw, with no visible following. His application was rejected outright as the registering authorities found his a classic example of those out to ridicule democracy in Cameroon.

Actually, from 1991 when political parties returned, to the time of the last Presidential Elections in 1997, so many of the parties had died a natural death. They wound themselves up leaving only the strongest to survive. We still had some eight presidential candidates in 1997, to vice for Presidency of Cameroon. CPDM candidate President Paul Biya nevertheless swept a landslide victory capturing a massive 92.54% percent vote in the nation as a whole.

Paul Biya's landslide victory had been a foregone conclusion since such challengers as John Fru Ndi and Bouba Bello had given up the race. They had seen the handwriting on the wall and Paul Biya's resounding victory was also the nation's confirmation of his Prime Minister Peter Mafany Musonge. In the new cabinet, ministers were drawn not only from the ruling majority CPDM party, but from the UNDP and UPC Even SDF were discussing the possibility of coming into the common circle of a united nation addressing itself to seeking

the peoples' general interest and welfare.

The trend has never been otherwise than that the people want their development and welfare in unity and peace. Their enjoyment of the spirit of one people united in the name of Cameroon is a force forever. It can only grow from strength to strength, sinking deeper and deeper into a Cameroon that had, from 1966, learnt to share the joy of one great national party across the land. Those who have entertained doubt in our African spirit of "Government" with no set "Opposition" should watch the unfolding trend in Cameroon.

Achidi's Stormy Time

Simon Achidi Achu was appointed Prime Minister in the stormy days that followed the return of multiparties in Cameroon. He had been leader of the group up in the North West Province that remained faithful to the CPDM National Party of Paul Biya, when Mr. John Fru Ndi formed a new party – Social Democratic Front (SDF) and there was a virtual stampede into that party, by people of the North West Province.

The SDF had commenced on a very high note of civil disobedience - violence, burning of tyres in the streets, on roads and burning of houses of members and supporters of the ruling CPDM party. The SDF party then ordered the stoppage of our public transport system, halting the movement of taxis, buses etc. for virtually six months. It asked its members to stop paying taxes and to disrespect national events and institutions. At the height of its civil disobedience, it is reported that its leader once set out to seize Unity Palace Yaounde (the official residence of the President) and install himself the Head of State. The story goes that he had only been halted somewhere on his way to Yaounde, by the forces of law and order.

It is at this period that the elections of 1992 for the National Assembly fell due, resulting in a most stormy campaign. For some strange reason the overconfident SDF party decided to boycott the 1992 parliamentary elections, and so fielded no candidates. Its order for a national boycott of the elections was of course ignored by the ruling CPDM party and disobeyed by others like the UNDP. The CPDM party strategists quickly took advantage of the SDF boycott, and quietly collected the twenty seats of the North West Province into their bag.

Among those strategists and CPDM faithful in the North West was the unshakable Simon Achidi Achu, President of the Mezam Section of the CPDM. Other stalwarts of the CPDM of the North West who faced virtual hell in all forms of intimidation against their persons, families and supporters must be mentioned. Fon Angwafor of Mankon had part of his houses burnt down. Mr. Achidi Achu's house was burnt down, with his old mother nearly a victim. Hon. Peter Fomum had all his houses burnt down. Luke Anangah's family house was burnt down at Njindom. The Hon. Francis Nkwain, Mr. John Niba Ngu, the Hon. S.N. Tamfu, Fon Doh of Bali-Kumbat to name only these few were visited by SDF thugs with all forms of violence and intimidation during this time.

At the end of the elections, the CPDM party was able despite the odds against it, to garner a working majority in the National Assembly, and the twenty members from the North West CPDM faithful were crucial in securing that working majority in parliament. It did not therefore surprise most observers, to find the President appointing Simon Achidi Achu Prime Minister and Head of Government.

The period indeed needed a man with the varied mature talent of Simon Achidi Achu, for while he possessed the most placid manners and personality, while his voice always sounded peaceful and conciliatory, he could be firm and resolute when the occasion arose. A true believer in the cause of the CPDM he went through the severest tests during his time. Mr. John Fru Ndi, leader of the SDF came from Santa, the home town of Achidi Achu, and so to those there only waiting to see John Fru Ndi seize power, Achidi had represented one impeding the arrival of the SDF empire. Little wonder that even with their son as Prime Minister, the Santa people voted at the Municipal Elections of 21st January 1996, for an SDF controlled council. The Santa people have therefore gone down into history as preferring an SDF Santa Rural Council, to retaining their son as Prime Minister and Head of Government of the Republic of Cameroon.

Prime Minister Simon Achidi Achu served his term of office in the turmoil and stress that multi parties had brought about, but his voice of peace and reconciliation continued to sound across the land, from Bertua to Limbe, from Ebolowa to Maroua. His greatest test came when his post went to another son of the Fatherland, and sceptics expected Simon Achidi Achu to turn his back on his CPDM party. They were proved wrong. Simon only doubled his belief in the CPDM

cause, proving this by working hard and beating his opponents at Santa during the Parliamentary Elections of 17th May 1997, by 9,000 votes CPDM to 8,000 votes SDF (approximately). The Rt. Hon. Simon Achidi Achu continued to be a pillar of his party's strength with his comrades S.N. Tamfu, Fon Angwafor, Fon Doh, Francis Nkwain, John Niba Ngu, Prof. Ephraim Ngwafor, Peter Abety in the North West in particular and the country as a whole.

These younger voices of the CPDM did a lot to keep the peoples of the North West Province still numbered amongst those on the positive side of Cameroon politics, and struck a blow for their people against the sad contradictions of some earlier political leaders.

Musonge Mounts the Stage

One of those events this decade that rocked the people of the South West Province in general and the Bakweri and Oroko tribes in particular with joy, was the appointment as Prime Minister and Head of Government of the Republic of Cameroon, of Mr. Peter Mafany Musonge. (Though a Bakweri he had been born in Dikome Balue, where his father was Headmaster of the Basel Mission School there; the Oroko traditionally regard him their son.)

These people little knowing, had waited for forty years, to once again share the joy of seeing their son at such a vital helm of Cameroon political power, since Dr. Endeley held the post of Prime Minister of Southern Cameroons in 1958. Musonge's appointment on 19th September 1996 after his people's long wait to see a Prime Minister, some how coincided with the wanderings in the desert in search of a homeland of the Biblical children of Israel. Each had lasted forty years.



The Rt. Hon. Peter Mafany Musonge. Prime Minister and Head of Government of the Republic of Cameroon. Assumed office on 19th September 1996.

Mr. Musonge had been General Manager of the Cameroon Development Corporation, and while his new appointment surprised many politicians, it did not in substance fail to score the point. He had done a remarkable job to keep the giant

CDC afloat. Taking it up limping in financial uncertainty, as central Government subventions had been stopped, world prices for our commodities were at their worst, few gave him a chance. U.A.C. (now Pamol) had gone into liquidation; Elders and Fyffes had folded up and Cadbury and Fry at Ikiliwindi, Kumba, just could not effectively take off the ground. These had been bedfellows with CDC in the plantation business.

It is here that Musonge's multiple talent showed out. In his cool persuasive approach, he was able to convince workers to accept part pay and invest the other part into a Compulsory Savings Scheme. He was, despite the gloom around, still able to inspire confidence in foreign lenders to the point of securing an F.E.D. loan of seven billion francs at a time when other lenders had virtually written off CDC. He applied the engineer's skill in management and control and thus succeeded to steer the Corporation through the turbulent economic storms then rocking the world, until calmer waters and safe docking.

Those of us who worked close to him were happily surprised and

almost bewildered between which to choose, a competent General Manager or a Prime Minister. Of course, in only moments, I in particular as Chairman of the Board of Governors of CDC happily came to terms with the fact that, better a Prime Minister than a General Manager.

On 19th September 1996, Mr. Peter Mafany Musonge mounted the stage in succession to the Rt. Hon. Simon Achidi Achu, as the Prime Minister and Head of Government of the Republic of Cameroon.

Changing of the Guards at CDC

As I was working on the manuscript of this work, there occurred a significant Changing of Guards at the Cameroon Development Corporation. The baton of command, which had remained in the hand of Prime Minister Peter Mafany Musonge for some time, changed hands on 10th of March 1998 to Mr. Henry Njalla Quan.



Henry Njalla Quan. He succeeded Mr. P.M. Musonge as General Manager of CDC after his careers as Director Ports Authority and Government Delegate Limbe Urban Council.

Mr. Henry Njalla Quan is a grandson of the legendary Manga Williams, former member of the Eastern House of Assembly Enugu and of the Legislative Council, Lagos, during the days of the Richard's Constitution. The towering Henry Njalla Quan coming from a family

renowned for producing public servants came handy to fill the post of General Manager of the Cameroon Development Corporation. During his installation on 18th April 1998 at the Middle Farms grounds Bota, while presenting my address, I readily remembered English history when William Pitt the younger had so impressed Edmond Burke (the orator) after his first speech in the House of Commons that Burke exclaimed, “He is not a chip off the old block, he is the old block itself. Mr. Henry Njalla Quan was indeed Manga Williams, much the same man that we knew, in feature and voice save in height where Quan may have reduced his grandfather to a short man.

An engineer by profession before coming to the CDC, he enjoyed an impressive public record for his age, in the Ports Authority he had been a Director, and at the Limbe Urban Council, he had been Government Delegate. In CDC he was boldly meeting the challenge to tackle the problems of that giant ... Corporation. Not even the proposed “privatization” of that body could slow him down in his programme to reorganize staff and intensify planting and expansion.

In a few months of taking over, he was already listing progress on the sound foundation of his predecessor who had set the pace. A workforce undoubtedly ruffled by the term “privatization” clearly needed a new impetus to reassure confidence. Njalla Quan was equal to the occasion and only in days of his taking over, he was spinning round the estates to meet the men he had come to work with.

If destiny played fair with him, he possessed the drive to go places and justify his appointment with the CDC.

When the Powers of Europe sat in Berlin in 1884 to 1885 and partitioned Africa between themselves as hunters share their slain elephant, one of the parts was named Kamerun and given to Germany. This is the German version of a name that began with Rio dos Cameros (Portuguese), Cameroons (English). Cameroun (French). The Germans ran the territory mostly through their plantation system for thirty years (1886 to 1916).

The First World War in 1914 found Germany facing Britain and France, and the British forces from Nigeria seized the western portion of the territory next to Nigeria in 1916. The French took the eastern, much bigger part. At the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 following the end of the war in 1918, the victorious allies of France and Britain formally took their shares of the once German colony, the British administering theirs as an integral part of their territory (Nigeria) while the French administered their, much larger piece as a separate complete unit in their colonial empire. All the former German colonies were placed under the mandate of the League of Nations the world body which emerged out of Versailles, and agreements were signed between the League and Britain and France, as the mandatory powers.

British Cameroons administered in two portions (the southern part under Eastern Nigeria and the north under Northern Nigeria) attained independence in 1961 after 45 years, through a plebiscite in which the majority of its population had voted for union with the French-administered part, it having attained independence a year earlier in 1960. Both now exist as the Republic of Cameroon. The northern portion of British Cameroons had elected at the UNOorganised plebiscite of 1961, to remain with Northern Nigeria for her independence. So had ended the exercise which began in 1884/1885 in Berlin when this part of Africa was accorded that initial identity the Germans had named Kamerun.

The reborn state of Cameroon today can look back from 1884, in working out the balance sheet of her history and story. Thirty years of German Kamerun, forty-five years of British administration of her part, forty-four years of the French on their part. Thirty-seven/thirty-

eight years since independence in 1960/1961. We must not forget an earlier thirty years of British connection (1858-1886). This period began from 1858 when a British Baptist missionary Alfred Saker sailed into Ambas Bay with some two hundred ex-slaves from America and founded Victoria, now Limbe. The place was named Victoria after Queen Victoria of England, and so started the thirty years of that first British connection. This is why we add those early 30 years to forty-five to give seventy-five years in favour of our British link, and if we add the thirty-seven years since independence (30+45+37) we end up with 112 years as I write this on 9/11/98. The French have their total of only (44+37) 81 years. It must frankly surprise any analyst to see what results the French can show, for 81 years against the British 112 years. Against this picture, we must add the fact that the German plantations and 200 freed slaves from America were all on the British side. Why the British with 112 years of connection can be so beaten by the French in Cameroon with only 81 years, sounds like a million-dollar question.

Let us now turn to the last part of this balance sheet, after independence and unification in 1961. On the British side in 1961, the picture showed Mr. J. N. Foncha as Prime Minister and Vice President of the Republic with Ahmadou Ahidjo as President. With a Federal system of Government in place, we had the Federal Government in Yaounde at the top of the pyramid with the Federated states and their Governments at Buea and Yaounde. From the Buea base John Ngu Foncha, Augustine Ngom Jua and Solomon Tandeng Muna became Prime Ministers in succession while on the other side Charles Assale and Simon Pierre Tsoungui had been Prime Ministers.

With a constitutional change in 1972 that abolished the Federal arrangement ushering in its place a unitary system, J. N. Foncha who had been Vice President since the union, continued for some time before being replaced by S.T. Muna. Ahidjo had continued as President. Deriving its origin from the Federal constitution where it was provided that when a citizen from one of the Federated states was President, the Vice President was to come from the other state, the spirit has continued to ensure such balance, even in a unitary system. When the post of Vice President ceased to exist, that spirit carried on by making the President of the National Assembly a citizen from the former West Cameroon (Mr. S. T. Muna) to pair up with President Ahidjo and later with President Paul Biya.

The Hon. Lawrence Fonka Shang replaced Mr. S.T.

Muna when the latter did not run for a seat to the National Assembly. After the death of Fonka Shang, Hon. Cavaye Jibril became President of the National Assembly while Prime Minister Hayatou gave way to Simon Achidi Achu as Prime Minister.

As earlier said, the period of Prime Minister Simon Achidi Achu came in 1992 during the stormy return of multiparty politics in Cameroon where the leading opposition parties applied the most violent methods of intimidation to wrest power. People travelling were made to buy cards of parties to which they had not freely chosen to belong, for their safety.

As if these local tensions were not bad enough, in 1995 a group which identified itself as SCNC (Southern Cameroons National Conference) aroused a great movement especially amongst the younger generation, aimed at the establishment of what they styled an “independent state of Southern Cameroons.” A delegation comprising Dr. J.N. Foncha, Mr. S.T. Muna, Barrister Elad, Dr. Munzu Mr. Njoh Litumbe, Justice A.N.T. Mbu travelled out of the country claiming to be on their way to the United Nations Organisation in search of their objective of a Southern Cameroons independent state. After their wanderings to New York, Washington, London and Paris, the delegation came back with a flag claiming same to have been given them at the United Nations. Crowds came welcoming these men who claimed to have brought back “the independence of Southern Cameroons” and the “flag” from the United Nations. Police and gendarmes were strained to their limits in controlling the young people who were being told strange tales, and made to entertain false hopes and dreams. ‘Attempts to hoist the “flag” were resisted by the forces of law and order all over the place.

The story of Cameroon re-unification was given such a distortion that many Cameroon’ historians and politicians were compelled to recheck their notes and records. I wrote often to explain the truth of the matter and even printed a pamphlet “The Other Side of the S.C.N.C. story”.

- There was no truth that the UNO could re-open the issue of Southern Cameroons Independence which had been settled since

1961, through a UNO ... organised plebiscite.

- There was no possibility of any re-consideration of the matter on the strange premise put forward by leaders of the S.C.N.C. that the Southern Cameroons people had not understood the plebiscite question since they had no “lawyers but only grade II teachers.”

- There was no organ of the UNO that could hear complaints against member states of the United Nations from its citizens, especially on such issue as the quest for independence or secession from a member state of the UNO

- The UNO could on no account have handed a flag to the Elad delegation as a token that Southern Cameroons had reverted to Trusteeship status again.

- The Elad delegation was therefore a deceit of the unwary *Cameroon people* especially the innocent youth, and a monstrous abuse of that confidence the people place in political leaders.

The question however still begs for answer as to why men in public standing such as constituted the Elad delegation of 1995, went on that political wild goose chase. It seems to me that on return of multi-party politics many people went out in search of new political policies and fortunes, just as most gamblers do. These men finding no sure room in the existing corridors of power went out on a new search, in a new gamble. They counted on the comparative innocence of the youth from whose wrath against Yaounde, they hinged their hopes to build a political base true or false. Unfortunately they ran against the hurdles that all speculators and gamblers often encounter and they lost.

For indeed, how could Foncha say that in 1961 when we voted at our now historic plebiscite, we had no lawyers, whereas Lawyer S.M.L. Endeley had returned since 1960 when he defended me and Dr. Endeley at the Frambo Inquiry; when lawyer Paul Engo had returned and was a Magistrate; E.K. Mensah had returned and was a Magistrate; E.T. Egbe as lawyer had come back and even served as Speaker of Southern Cameroons House of Assembly; when engineers Ndumu, Sendze etc had come home; V.C. Nchami, Oscar Ebanja, V.E. Mukete, Peter Efange, Eric Quan and others had long returned to the Cameroons with their academic laurels. How could Foncha be speaking the truth to insult Grade II teachers in the Cameroons by

saying that they did not understand the plebiscite questions meant for mere peasants and plantation workers to answer with a white or green ballot paper as to their choice of Southern Cameroons future. Since 1951 we had long started producing outstanding politicians like Endeley, Muna, George, Sama Ndi, Kangsen, Jua, Fonlon, Tamfu, Ando Seh, Chief Charley, Motomby-Woleta, Mbile etc. etc., and when Grade II teachers were good enough to replace expatriate administrative offices as D.O.s and many acquitted themselves creditably in their new posts.

Those who choose to condemn our present regime which is the logical outcome of all our political metamorphosis' from 1858, should be more honest in their verdict, and should begin from themselves in passing such judgment. In the African society, where the silent millions depend on their educated children and elite in their political choices, where even the European oriented systems and choices are often a virtual imposition, the honesty and God given integrity of those who choose for their unwary followers become imperative. Indeed leaders bear total responsibility for the outcome of the chosen options. When therefore the African leader chooses out of personal interest rather than for the general good, he cannot turn round to condemn that same choice because of a personal set back. Nature having endowed people with that ability to adapt to all conditions to which they may be exposed, selfish leaders may soon find that people, whose interest they weren't really concerned with may have long become accustomed to even the harshest choice. In that case an about turn by a selfish leader may find the people unwilling and unable to turn with him.

In our Cameroon political balance sheet, the account is long and varied. There are those who in 1858 founded Victoria. There are those who joined the train in 1886 under William Kaiser's Germany with the First World War of 1914 registering the end of an empire. With the British formal arrival in 1916, some records put it as early as 1915, they lasted a near half-century at the close of their time in Cameroon, leaving us a language and a culture that should long endure. The challenges of independence since 1961 have come in their wake, and the panorama of this new scene is unfolding before our eyes, registering its milestones along our nation's way. With a new century only one year away, we must face that coming millennium with confidence against the experiences on this piece of our planet in 140 years. The course of our history lies there to remind us of how we have

trod along these past years. Our various milestones stand guiding this nation as it enters a new orbit into the future.

What a balance sheet that looms before us on which the nation sometimes registers red and sometimes black. The Cameroon political balance sheet derives from its citizen's individual and collective contribution. It therefore seems to me, binding on all to whom Cameroon is home to ensure each time, an honest positive entry.

As I end this contribution, this record of the Cameroon political story, let the judges of my effort permit me to close on an optimistic note. After all is said and done, the Cameroon experiment' in 140 years (beginning from Alfred Saker's landing in 1858, to the arrival of the Germans thirty years later, to the coming of the British in 1916, through their stay in Cameroon for forty-five years, and onto our own since 1961, these thirty-seven years) must be judged a resounding triumph. We must of course allow for human error and limitations in our endeavours across the years. We could not register a prouder record.

All the actors did their best; we must concede that they all meant well, the missionaries, the British, from Queen Victoria to Elizabeth II, the Germans of William Kaiser, the French across the Mungo; down to the efforts of ourselves West of the Mungo; Chief Manga Williams, Galega II - Fon of Bali, Dr E.M.L. Endeley, Dr J.N. Foncha, Augustine Ngom Jua, Solomon Tandeng Muna, Simon Achidi Achu, Peter Mafany Musonge. East of the Mungo; Alexander Ndoumbe Douala Manga-Bell, Mbida, Ahmadou Ahidjo, Paul Biya, Charles Assale, Pierre Tsoungui, Sadou Hayatou, Bouba Bello Maigari to name only these. They all have played their parts in a Cameroon truly reborn. Indeed, the state of Cameroon has firmly come to stay, standing as firm as Mount Cameroon, ready to take its place and face the coming ages.

Our children and their heirs,
Now own a Fatherland,
In which to dwell in happiness,
And proudly call their own.
To love and to adore,
And if the call should ever come,
For which to nobly die.

“N.N. MBILE DESCRIBES WITH GREAT WIT, HUMOUR AND THE POWER OF NARRATIVE, THE EVENTS THAT CULMINATED IN THE BIRTH OF CAMEROON. HE DESCRIBES EACH EVENT WITH CLARITY AND PENETRATING INSIGHT AS A PARTICIPANT AND OBSERVER. HE RAISES QUESTIONS IN HIS ANALYSIS WHICH CALL ON EVERY PATRIOTIC CAMEROONIAN TO REFLECT ON HOW FAR WE HAVE COME AS A SOCIETY AND HOW FAR WE HAVE TO GO. THIS FASCINATING AND REVEALING BOOK BEARS SIGNIFICANCE FOR ALL CAMEROONIANS AND THE WORLD AS IT DEMONSTRATES THAT BELIEF IN A COMMON ANCESTRY, COLLECTIVE EFFORT, THE WILL TO SUCCEED AND POSITIVE WISDOM ARE NEEDED IN FULL MEASURE TO UNLEASH OUR BEST POTENTIAL FOR MEANINGFUL PROGRESS, PEACE AND UNITY.”

- **PETER MAFANY MUSONGE, PRIME MINISTER OF CAMEROON (SEPTEMBER 1996 UNTIL DECEMBER 8, 2004)**

THE CAMEROON POLITICAL STORY is a long journey through the eyes and actions of the author himself. It is a mix between Mbile's memoirs, a bit of his biography and the Cameroon political story, heavily weighted in favour of that part of the Republic formerly identified as Southern Cameroons, later West Cameroon, now South West and North West Regions. The story is told in the interest of the Cameroonian youth and scholar who have often complained of the inadequate recording by political leaders of the life and deeds of their times. It is the story of an African boy of humble village beginnings who rose to participate in the making of a modern political community. It is hoped the book provides useful knowledge on the history, growth and constitutional evolution of Cameroon, a country which after more than a century of administrative metamorphosis settled to its present statehood in 1961, a Cameroon reborn.

NERIUS NAMASO MBILE was born in 1923 at Lipenja, Batanga, Ndian Division. He obtained his Senior Cambridge Certificate in 1945. From 1947-49, he joined the Zik's Group of Newspapers Lagos as Reporter and served as Resident Correspondent to the Cameroons. An accomplished journalist, trade unionist and politician, Mbile is widely recognised as one of the rare breed of founding fathers of the Cameroon nation west of the Mungo.



Langaa Research & Publishing
Common Initiative Group
P.O. Box 902 Mankon
Bamenda
North West Region
Cameroon

